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DISCOURSE

OF THE

Government

OF THE

THOUGHTS.

By *GEORGE TULLIE*,

Sub-Dean of *York*.

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MVSEVM BRITANNICVM

30c

TO THE

Moſt Reverend Father in God

JOHN

By Divine Providence

Lord Arch-Biſhop of *York*, His Grace, Primate of *England* and Metropolitan.

May it pleaſe your Grace,

THAT I take the liberty to Prefix ſo Great a Name to ſo ſmall a

Treatiſe; onely the Dignity of the Subject indeed makes ſome Compenſation for the defects and meanneſs of the Preſent, for the Argument is Truly Great and Noble in it ſelf, and what would deſerve a much abler Pen, more leiſure for Abſtractions, a more Poiloſophical Genius,

Genius, and both a wider Compaſs, and a cloſer Collection of Thought, than any I can pretend to. Thus much however may be ſaid, that a ſenſe of that Edification, which ought always to be the chief Aim and Deſign of the Pulpit, which firſt gave Birth to this Diſcourſe, obliged me

to write as familiarly and practically as the Subject would well admit of. Such as it is, My Lord, my Relation to the Church of York, *the just Esteem one has for the Concurrence of so many excellent Qualifications in one Person, and my particular Obligations to your Grace, makes this*

this publick Acknowledgment of them a Juſt Debt from,

My Lord,

Your Graces Moſt Dutiful

and obliged Servant,

GEORGE TULLIE.

THE

PREFACE.

THO I have no great Opinion of Prefaces, to ſmall Tracts eſpecially, that ſeem not to require any Prolegomena, *and ſo conſequently deſign'd none, yet, ſince the printing This off, I find my ſelf under a ſort of Obligation to ſay ſomething that way, having been inform'd by ſome Friends, that there was a Treatiſe lately publiſh'd (which has ſince come to my hands) with the ſame Title I deſign'd*

ſign'd for mine, and with a great Name annex'd to it; and that both the Book, and the Vanity *(as they thought it) of the Title Page paſs'd for mine with thoſe that did not know me. From which Imputation the publiſhing of this will, I hope, ſufficiently clear me.*

As to the Tract it ſelf, I ſhall make no other Reflection on it, than that it were indeed to be wiſh'd that That excellent Perſon, whoſe Name the Author is pleas'd to make uſe of, had carried on his Meditations from The Government of the Tongue, *to the Springs and Wheels of all its Motions, thoſe* Thoughts *that ſet it a going; for then we might have expected a juſt Diſcourſe indeed upon the Argument.*

I have little more to add, but that I am ſenſible the Subject I have here undertaken might be manag'd after a much

much different manner from what it is by me, and that without running out either into the wide Field of Logic or the Passions, which are distinct Arguments, both in themselves, and from what I here intended.

A Man who can turn his Eyes vigorously inward, and read the hidden and mysterious part of himself, might, no doubt, make several Reflections thereupon, not unworthy the Observation of the thinking World; as, that in our most abstracted Researches after Truth, our Notices of things are fetch'd more from extrinsick and accidental hints, than a just and regular *inquiry, and a man often* falls upon *a luckly thought as casually as* Printing *and* Gunpowder *were invented; that if the motion of our Thoughts in composing,* &c. *like that of the Sun, be both quick and bright too, that yet something of*

Earth,

Earth, *as the objects of ſenſe, a fume or vapour in the head often interpoſes betwixt us and the* Sun ſhine *we enjoyed, and* eclipſes *the expected diſcovery; that ſometimes a ſudden* Flaſh *of Thought breaks in upon us, but either ſo faintly bright, that it but juſt* gilds *our Underſtanding, and then flies off, or ſo plentifully, that it* dazles *and overpowers our Faculties, that we cannot retain it, as Meats of too high a Taſte are not eaſily digeſted by a weak Stomach; that if our Thoughts run* turbid *and* lutulent, *as the* dregs *and* ſediments *of Mortality will often make them do, that then they riſe not up to the heighth of their Subject, if quick and nimble, that they ſeldom prove ſolid and weighty, as the ſame Stream is rarely rapid and deep too; that the Poſition of a Chain of Thoughts*

may

may be eaſilier banter'd than confuted, and that their Succeſſion is by no means ſo fortuitous a thing as unobſerving men are apt to apprehend it. He might ſhew particularly, and at large, how the Prejudices of Education, Intereſt, Paſſion, &c. pervert the Sentence of the Underſtanding, when it ſits upon its Object; that hence principally derive thoſe different Sentiments of Things and Perſons, that ſo much imbroil the World; and that were it not for theſe Bribes that corrupt our Thoughts, all Mankind would think *alike here, as 'tis certain they will do in each different ſtate hereafter, ſince Truth in every thing is ſtill the ſame, and like its Great Author, can be but one, a ſtreight line that admits of none but it ſelf betwixt the ſame indiviſible Points, and that 'tis therefore*

in

in a conſiderable meaſure the Obliquity *of mens Wills and Affections that hinder their Thoughts from running* parallel *with it and one another.*

Thus a Man by obſerving the working *of his Thoughts upon all Occaſions, whether of Speculation or Practice, might furniſh the World with ſuch Remarks as would carry both Pleaſure and Profit in them, and let us more and more into the knowledge of the* terra incognita *of our own leſſer World, ſhew us both* how *we* think, *and how we might improve the mighty Talent. And herein the* Genius *of* Ariſtotle *was admirably great: He read himſelf, and therein all Mankind, in their true Light and proper Colours; for one man, ſtript to his Reaſon and the due uſe of his Faculties, is but the counterpart of another. His*

Logic

Logic was the pure result of his own Observations upon the working of his Thoughts and the proceeds of his Reason: For Logic does not teach us to argue, Nature did that before it, but reduces our arguings into Rules and Methods, and shews us how *we do it.*

These Reflections I have only briefly and hastily huddled together, that if they chance to fall in *with any happy and observing Genius, they may set it on work, and be the fortunate occasion of more perfect and consummate Productions in this kind, and then I should think this lame and imperfect Essay infinitely better bestow'd than otherwise 'tis like to be; for I am so sensible of its Imperfections, that I could heartily wish it in my Hands again. But 'tis now out of my own power, and so I must be content to lie at the mercy*

mercy of the Reader for venturing with ſo ſmall a force of Thought on ſo great and noble an Argument; for he that writes on Thoughts, writes on the Pride and Perfection of Humane Nature, on that which muſt yield us in a great meaſure the Satisfactions or Torments of the other Life, Thoughts excuſing *or* accuſing *their Owners. He writes on that which is an unanſwerable Proof of a divine, ſpiritual, and immortal Principle of Life and Motion in us: For I deſie all the Advocates of Deiſm or Atheiſm it ſelf, to conceive matter, howſoever thinn'd or modified, capable of thinking; for no Man, I am ſure, if he rightly conſults his own Principle of Thought, can poſſibly reconcile himſelf to this Apprehenſion, that Matter, pure Matter, can think, meditate, deliberate, reflect, be witty, argue,*

argue, infer, purſue long Chains of Conſequences, and impart to Man that Vivacity and Sprightfulneſs of Spirit, and that Vaſtneſs of Genius that diſplays it ſelf in him.

In a word, if any one is made wiſer, *but eſpecially* better *by what is here offer'd, I have my End.*

THE

THE Government OF THE THOUGHTS.

CHAP. I.

HE that designs to write of Thoughts, had need tell the World, in the first place, what he means by the Subject of his Discourse; for this is a vast Argument in the general, as wide as the Exercise and Dominion of all the Powers and Faculties of the Soul, and had need therefore be determin'd to some particular Kind or Species of its Operations; for there's no sayling to any Profit or Pleasure in so wide an Ocean, without knowing first whither you are bound, and what determinate Port you steer for.

I. THEN by Thoughts we do not underſtand thoſe Motions that paſs in the lower Region of the Soul, the Paſſions or Affections that are excited in the Will, or in the ſenſitive Appetite, as ſome love to ſpeak; theſe may indeed be touched upon now and then, by the by, but not otherwiſe. For beſides, that it is not my Deſign here to write a Book of Ethicks, as the Argument, conſidered in that latitude, would oblige me to do, the Paſſions or Affections are not Thoughts, in Propriety of Speech, but the Effects or Products of them, Thoughts are the Parents, Paſſions the Off-ſpring; for by thinking, reflecting, and the brooding of the upper Powers of our Souls, our Paſſions are form'd and brought forth in us; as the muſing on an agreeable Object, that we apprehend as preſent, raiſes in us Joy; on one that is yet in Expectation, Hope and Deſire; as, on the contrary, the Thoughts of an Object that is diſagreeable, creates in us Fear, Anger, or Sorrow, according as we conceive it preſent, or in futurity. Nor

II. DO

II. DO I intend to ſpeak here of all the ſeveral Operations that are tranſacted in the upper Region of the Soul, the Underſtanding, as of its ſimple Perceptions, forming of Propoſitions, diſcuſſive, and retaining or recollecting Power; the Government of the Thoughts, in this acceptation of the Word, would oblige me, to direct how to form true, and diſcover falſe Reaſonings, which is the Province of the Logicians, and would oblige me to run out into thoſe jejune and dry Speculations, that are improper for a Practical Deſign.

I mean then by Thoughts here, neither the Paſſions, nor yet the reaſoning, deliberating, and arguing Faculty of the Mind, but that Power chiefly, whereby we firſt of all gaze at, contemplate, muſe upon, and converſe with thoſe Images of things, which our Senſes, for the moſt part originally repreſent to our Fancies, and our Fancies from them, paint forth in our Minds. Any Man who gives himſelf the liberty to think, and can make his Under-

ſtanding the Object of its own Contemplations, is conſcious to himſelf of theſe primary Interviews of his Mind with the Objects let into it, and muſt own them antecedent to, and conſequently diſtinct from, both his Paſſions and Reaſonings about them; for a Man muſt firſt think, or look upon and view the Ideas in his Mind, before he can be any ways affected with, or argue or deliberate about them; as a Man, for Inſtance, muſt firſt think upon a formidable Object, before he fears it, or reaſons with himſelf how to eſcape the Danger, that threatens him.

NOR can it poſſibly, in the Third place, be expected that I ſhould treat of Thoughts in this limited acceptation of them, according to the vaſt variety of Objects, that are their ſubject-matter; for theſe were an Argument, in the Language of the Book of *Job*, Ch. 11. v. 8,9. *As high as Heaven, what canſt thou do? deeper than Hell, what canſt thou know? The meaſure thereof is longer than the Earth, and broader than the Sea.* Nor God, nor the whole frame and œconomy of Nature terminate the Horizon,

zon, or bound the ramble and excurſi-ons of our Thoughts, which extend themſelves even to *things that are not*, that have no other Being but what they borrow from a confus'd Imagination; for our Fancies, by a tumultuary compounding of Ideas, inſtead of real, can create fictitious Objects for their entertainment, and divert themſelves as well with a Chimera of their own Manufacture, as with the moſt real and ſubſtantial Being.

IT will be ſufficient therefore, and indeed all that can well be perform'd on this Argument, to draw the great and general Lines of ſeveral of thoſe excentrick Motions incident to our Thoughts, and to endeavour to preſcribe the Regulation of them.

BUT to recommend a Deſign of this nature to the Minds of Men with better Succeſs, it will be requiſite, in the firſt place, to premiſe ſome of thoſe many Obligations that lie upon us to govern our Thoughts as well as our exterior Words and Actions.

Sect. 2.

AND first, we are obliged to this Government of Thoughts, becaule we may tranſgreſs the Divine Law by them, as well as by the tranſactions of the outward Man. 'Twas a fundamental Flaw in the Righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees, and indeed of the generality of the whole Jewiſh Nation, that they thought an external Obedience to the Law, which exempted them from all temporal Penalties due to the Violation of it, ſufficient to denominate them righteous, without any regard had to the Innocency of their Hearts and Affections. 'Tis no ſtrange thing indeed, that the Heathens generally, who were left to diſcover the Divine Nature with the naked Eye of their own Faculties, ſhould content themſelves with ſuch an external Righteouſneſs, or Obedience as this, which reached the outward Man onely; but 'tis a very ſurprizing Conſideration, that the Jews themſelves ſhould take up with it, who knew their Law to have been enacted by

by a God, that is a Searcher of Hearts, who requires the ſervice of the Spirit, and will be lov'd and obey'd with all the Powers and Faculties of the Mind. But yet thus it was with that ſlow and carnal People: they had very little Concern upon them for the obſervance of the Precepts, that related to the regulating the Motions of the inner Man; for there being no Penalties expreſly annexed to them, they looked on them as *Advice* rather than *Precept*, or at worſt, that the Guilt, contracted by their mental Sins, was ſo done away by their Sacrifices, that God would remember them no more. They underſtood little or nothing beyond the political Covenant, the terms whereof chiefly influenc'd their Obedience, and ſo took up with ſuch a political Righteouſneſs, as conſiſted in the Obedience of the Civil Laws of the Jewiſh Commonweal: Hence it is, that *Trypho* the Jew, diſputing with *Juſtin Martyr*, ſays, that the Goſpel Precepts, meaning thoſe that command the Obedience of the Heart and Affections, ſeem'd to him incapable of Obſervance; and that *Joſephus* reprehends *Polybius* the Hiſtorian, for

Grot. in *Matth.* 25.

aſcribing the Death of *Antiochus* to Sacriledge intended, though not committed by him, τὸ γὰρ μηκέτι ποιῆσαι τὸ ἔργον βελευσάμενον, οὐκ ἐᾷ τιμωρίας ἄξιον, 'For as long, *ſaith he*, as he did not 'actually execute his Intentions, he de-'ſerv'd no Puniſhment: And that this was the old received Notion of Obedience, appears plainly enough from our Saviour's correcting this Miſpriſion, in the 5*th* of St. *Mat. Ye have heard*, ſaith he, *ver.* 21. *that it was ſaid by them of old time, thou ſhalt not kill*: If a Man did not actually murder another, he was thought to have kept within the Bounds of the Eighth Commandment, as indeed he did, as to the temporal Penalty annex'd to the Violation of it, which was then principally regarded; but our Lord tells them plainly, *ver.*22. that the Guilt in this particular, lies as deep as the very Beginnings, the firſt Efforts and Sallies of an angry Mind towards a fooliſh Quarrel that may end in Blood; in which Senſe St. *John* affirms, that *whoſoever hateth his Brother is a Murderer*, is already ſo, tho his Sword be ſtill unſheath'd, and he has ſtab'd him only *in Effigie*. Again, ſays he,

he, to the ſame purpoſe, at the 27*th ver.* *Ye have heard that it was ſaid by them of old time, thou ſhalt not commit Adultery,* if a Man did but refrain from the actual embraces of a forbidden Bed, how keenly ſoever he debauch'd by the ſtrength of an impure imagination, yet he was, for all that, in their notion of obedience, a chaſt and modeſt Man ſtill, but our Saviour tells them a Rape may be committed in the Fancy, and Adultery by a wanton Glance. And that this Jewiſh notion of Obedience, is not yet altogether antiquated under Chriſtianity, ſeems but too evident from that trite proverbial ſaying amongſt us; that *thoughts are free*; as if when Men durſt not let looſe their hands, or their tongues, to work wickedneſs, yet they might give their deſires and imaginations their full ſwing; and muſe, and wiſh, and contrive, and pleaſe themſelves with the Invention and Images of thoſe things which they think it not ſafe to put in execution; whereas, on the contrary, the Laws of our Lord preſcribe to our affections, ſet bounds to our fancies, regulate our deſires, direct our intentions, govern our

our wiſhes, ſtrike at ſin in embrio, and check the firſt voluntary motions and tendencies of the mind to evil. Voluntary, I ſay, becauſe 'tis hard to imagine that thoſe *motus primò primi*, as the Schools ſpeak, thoſe firſt ſtirrings of Concupiſcence which come not within the verge and compaſs of the Will, ſhould fall under the laſh and cenſure of the Law; a Souldier is not puniſhed for having an enemy to encounter, but for not doing his duty to repel his aſſaults, if, inſtead of watching and repreſſing his motions, he rather entertains him, then, but not till then, let the Law go upon him. God will certainly puniſh no Man for an imperfection that is not in his power to prevent, and which he did not himſelf voluntarily contract, will not call us to an account for being proper Subjects of the Operations of his Grace, but for miſ-uſing it, and will not require it at any Man's hands that he has the *Seeds* of evil ſcatter'd in his compoſition, but for ſuffering them to *fructifie* in the ſoil. However, it muſt ſtill be own'd that as to all the irregular motions of the inner Man, that fall under the diſpoſal

of

of our Wills, God hath concluded them all under ſin, that, by *the wicked Man's forſaking his thoughts*, the numberleſs vain thoughts that fly up and down his mind; he might the *more abundantly pardon*, Iſ. 55. v. 7. accordingly the ſame Prophet tells us of thoſe that *err in Spirit*, *Solomon* of thoſe that err in imagining evil, *Prov.* 14. 22. and *Micah* denounces woe to *the Deviſers of Iniquity*. Hence the ſame wiſe King of *Iſrael* tells us in one place, that *the thought of fooliſhneſs is ſin*; in another place, that *they err who deviſe Evil*; in a third, that *the thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord*; as his Father *David* had before obſerv'd of ſome that *their inward parts were very wickedneſs*, and tells us of others that *in their heart work wickedneſs*, hence again it is that St. *Peter* requires *Simon Magus to repent of the thoughts of his heart* (for what is the ſubject of our Repentance but our Sins,) that St. *Paul* requires us to *bring into Captivity every thought to the obedience of Chriſt*, which ſuppoſes that of themſelves they are naturally rebellious; that our Saviour reprehends the Phariſees for *thinking Evil*, and affirms of

Iſ. 29. 24.
21.
Prov. 24. 9.
Prov. 14. 22.
Prov. 15. 26.
Pſal. 5. 9.
Pſal. 58. 2.
Acts 8. 22.
2 Cor. 10. 4.
Matt. 9. 4.
Matt. 15. 18, 19.
Matt. 5.

of *Evil Thoughts* that *they defile the Man*, as well as when they ſhoot forth into the exterior actions of Murder, Adultery, *&c.* The very intention and deſire whereof he elſewhere equals with overt Tranſgreſſions of the kind. The reaſon of all is, that God being the Father of the Spirits of all fleſh, and the Kingdom of his Son a ſpiritual Kingdom too, 'tis congruous both to the Divine Nature, and ours, which is a ſtricture of his, that his Laws bear ſway in our ſpiritual part, in our Hearts and Souls, our Wills and Affections; for would we have an infinitely glorious Spirit ſerv'd by dull Fleſh and Blood only, and not rather like himſelf, in Spirit and in Truth, with thoſe prime productions, thoſe firſt born Sons of the immortal Nature in us? Has God made us Men, and would we pay him but the ſpiritleſs Homage of the animal part of us? Has he implanted a noble and immortal Principle of Life and Motion in us, and ſhall it not ſhare in our Obedience to him, and conſequently in the Guilt of the Tranſgreſſion of his Laws? He is the natural Lord of both Soul and Body, has

has bought them with a Price, and therefore all the Reaſon in the World the Obedience we pay him ſhould be commenſurate to the extent of his Purchaſe; ſo that if we have any juſt abhorrence of Sin in the true Latitude of the Divine conſtruction of it, we muſt govern our Thoughts, as well as obſerve meaſures in our words and actions.

Sect. 3.

BUT I ſhall farther evince the obligations that lie upon us to order our Thoughts aright, from ſuch conſiderations as ſeem to enhance the guilt of mental Sins above thoſe of the outward Man. For

I. THO' it be an argument that Sin has acquired an arbitrary power over us, and that the Law in our members has got the aſcendant over the Law of our Minds, when the ſeeds of evil Thoughts ſhoot forth into criminal Words and Actions, and in this reſpect the off-ſpring is worſe than the Parent, that is, 'tis worſe to ſpeak and do Evil than

than barely to think it; yet consider the outward acts of Sin separately and apart by themselves, abstracted from those previous cogitations that give them Birth, and then the Sins of the mind are infinitely more criminal; for is it not worse to prostitute an immortal Soul to sin and folly than a mouldering Carcase? The one is in the nature of the Artificer that models and contrives the Sin, the other but as the instrument as it were in its hand; and who reckons the murdering Sword as faulty as he that dar'd to sheath it in his Brother? The one is as the mother of the spurious Brat, or the womb wherein Lust first conceives, till the Heart grow big and the reckoning of the Sin be out; the other only comes and Midwives it into the World, and brings forth that which *brings forth Death*; and who ever thought these two equally criminal? Nay, set aside the Guilt that derives from the corruption of the Mind, and why should the worst actions of the outward Man be reputed any more sinful than those of the Horse and the Mule that have no understanding? for Sin is properly in the

the Soul only; the proper ſubject both of it, and of that Grace which corrects it.

II. OUR Thoughts are always *firſt in the Tranſgreſſion*, and ſo in reſpect of precedency, are more inexcuſable than outward actions; they are Ring-leaders in the Rebellion of Sin againſt God, and Perſons of that Character are generally made as exemplary in their Puniſhment, as they are for their Crime; theſe are the firſt begotten of their Father the Devil, the eldeſt Sons of original corruption, *the might and the beginning of the ſtrength* of Sin in us. *Out of the Heart proceed evil Thoughts, Murders*, &c. There the Son of violence firſt lays his ſcene of Blood, the Extortioner of Oppreſſion, the Adulterer of the forbidden Bed, and ſo of the reſt, for a Man firſt *deviſes Miſchief*, in the Pſalmiſt's language, and then *puts himſelf in a way that is not good, and abhorreth not evil*: Nay they are not only thus the Devil's puny Counſel, that open the Cauſe and make a Motion in behalf of Sin, but they are perpetually ſoliciting, abetting and pleading its Cauſe at the Bar

Bar of a debauch'd fancy and a bribed understanding, where many times they unhappily carry it; for 'tis no wonder that a corrupt Judge should give it on their side. Thus do our Thoughts cater and *make Provision for the Flesh to fulfill the Lusts thereof*, bring and recommend the beloved Object to the Heart, till it dotes and commits actual Folly with it; thus they lay in fuel for our Sins, and not only enkindle, but blow up the Fire into open flaming Wickedness; and therefore:

III. SINS of Thought are more criminal than outward Transgressions, in as much as the Guilt of the one derives from the other, for all Thoughts are Errors, as it were, of the first concoction, which affect Nature in all her subsequent operations of life. Thoughts are as the Principal, outward acts but as Accessories. The one is in the nature of the Cause, the other of the Effect, for *out of the abundance of the Heart does both the Mouth speak* and the Hands act, and *out of it*, says the Wise Man, *are the Issues of Life*, and I add, of Death too. And who can blame the Streams

Streams for their neceſſary partaking of the Pollutions of their Fountain? Thoughts then are the *Principle* of Spiritual Life, or Spiritual Death in us, that great leading Wheel within the Engine, which as when it moves regularly, it cauſes the outward *Hand* of our Words and Actions to *Point* right, ſo when 'tis out of courſe, it puts all in the like diſorder with it; for our Actions will be of a piece with our Thoughts, and no one acts like a Wiſe Man, who thinks like a Fool. *O Generation of Vipers*, ſays our Lord to the Phariſees, *how can ye, being Evil, think good Things*? For, *who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean*? Who can bring good Words or Deeds out of fooliſh, wandring, and unhallow'd Thoughts? for, *how ſhall a Man reap there where he has not ſow'd*? Can he from Weeds reap Grain, *gather Grapes of Thorns, or Figs of Thiſtles*?

IV. IF we govern not our Thoughts, they will govern us, or, to ſpeak more properly, will leave us without any true government of our ſelves, they are natural movers that need no wind-

ing up, but are inceſſant in their motion towards Good or Evil, and therefore if we take not care to determine them to proper Objects, they will run out upon any that come in their way, will haunt and dog us to the Table, to the Bed, to the Cloſet, to the Church, will be perpetually intruding, interpoſing, and interrupting us in our Duty, will either intercept all good motions, or diſtract and confuſe us in the performance of them, and to be ſure, will be moſt buſie and impertinent at the time of our Religious Services, when we are to compoſe our Souls to the ſevereſt ſobriety and intenſeneſs of Meditation.

V. THE peculiar malignity of evil Thoughts is farther viſible in this, that they render the outward act of Sin more or leſs criminal, according as they have been more or leſs active in the contrivance of it: for every previous reaſoning, premeditation, and debate, enhances its Guilt, and inflames its Puniſhment, as that which argues a more ſtudied and deliberate contempt of the ſupreme Legiſlator, and therefore it was

was that the Murder of *Uriah* was more charged upon *David* than his Adultery with *Bathſheba*. He took a great deal of thought about the one, but in the other thoughts took him.

VI. SINS of Thought have this particular aggravation above outward breaches of the Law, that they are committed upon leſs Temptation than theſe, and the weaker the Temptation, the more powerful is the ſtrength of Sin in us. The two great leading Paſſions of the Soul that determine us to, or deter us from, outward acts, are our Hopes, or our Fears, which carry many times ſo fatal and ſo ſtrong a Byas with them, that they incline us to Evil, even contrary to the Checks and Reluctancies of our own Minds.

ILL times may ſcare Men into thoſe actual complyances, which, left to themſelves, they abhor; and the impending danger, which, as it bore a mighty ſtroke in the commiſſion of the Sin, ſo, tho' it cannot juſtifie it, yet will it make ſome abatement of its Guilt; but Thoughts are, in this ſence,

free, free from all external Compulsion, nor Prisons can confine them, nor Fire nor Sword force them into a complyance; So that if they joyn in the Act, they are perfect Voluntiers in the service; and as our Thoughts are thus above the reach of fear, so of favour too, above the love of Friends, or the reverence of great Men, or the expectation of rewards, for who can pay a Man for that which no Man knows, but the Spirit of a Man which is in him; how shall outward Hopes influence the inward Transactions of ones own Breast only? External Acts of Sin indeed may have something to say for themselves, because they may chance to carry their wages, such as it is, along with them, but he who plays the Knave, the Adulterer, the Murderer, *&c.* in his own Heart, he has nothing in exchange for his Soul, but sins for pure sinnings sake, as it were, without any prospect of ever being consider'd for his pains, without any other wages than the old standing one of Death.

VII. AND Lastly, those Sins which have a more immediate relation to

to the Mind and Spirit, as Pride, Envy, Ambition, Malice, Unfaithfulneſs, Uncharitableneſs, *&c.* which are tranſacted moſtly in the inner Man, as they are more incorrigible, ſo conſequently more criminal, than others. For as to thoſe Vices which in a high meaſure depend upon the Tempers and Conſtitutions of our Bodies, want of fuel will in time dead their flame, when the Spirits flag, the Blood chills, and the Pulſe beats low, and the Evil days come on wherein we have no pleaſure in them, the decays of Nature ſet the Soul then at ſome tolerable ſort of liberty to reflect upon her own Condition; but as to the other, Age generally only ſerves to confirm and eſtabliſh us in them. For how rarely do we ſee a covetous wretch let go his hold of the Earth, 'tho he is dropping into it? How ſeldom are Envy and Malice exchang'd for Contentment and good Nature? And when ſee we the proud Ambitious Man reduced to the ſame level of Mind with his humble Neighbours? Sins of this kind have too much of the *Æthiopian*'s skin, and the *Leopard*'s ſpots, eaſily to admit the laver of regeneration. Ac-

Sect. 2.

AND firſt, we are obliged to this Government of Thoughts, becauſe we may tranſgreſs the Divine Law by them, as well as by the tranſactions of the outward Man. 'Twas a fundamental Flaw in the Righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees, and indeed of the generality of the whole Jewiſh Nation, that they thought an external Obedience to the Law, which exempted them from all temporal Penalties due to the Violation of it, ſufficient to denominate them righteous, without any regard had to the Innocency of their Hearts and Affections. 'Tis no ſtrange thing indeed, that the Heathens generally, who were left to diſcover the Divine Nature with the naked Eye of their own Faculties, ſhould content themſelves with ſuch an external Righteouſneſs, or Obedience as this, which reached the outward Man onely; but 'tis a very ſurprizing Conſideration, that the Jews themſelves ſhould take up with it, who knew their Law to have been enacted by

by a God, that is a Searcher of Hearts, who requires the ſervice of the Spirit, and will be lov'd and obey'd with all the Powers and Faculties of the Mind. But yet thus it was with that ſlow and carnal People: they had very little Concern upon them for the obſervance of the Precepts, that related to the regulating the Motions of the inner Man; for there being no Penalties expreſly annexed to them, they looked on them as *Advice* rather than *Precept*, or at worſt, that the Guilt, contracted by their mental Sins, was ſo done away by their Sacrifices, that God would remember them no more. They underſtood little or nothing beyond the political Covenant, the terms whereof chiefly influenc'd their Obedience, and ſo took up with ſuch a political Righteouſneſs, as conſiſted in the Obedience of the Civil Laws of the Jewiſh Commonweal: Hence it is, that *Trypho* the Jew, diſputing with *Juſtin Martyr*, ſays, that the Goſpel Precepts, meaning thoſe that command the Obedience of the Heart and Affections, ſeem'd to him incapable of Obſervance; and that *Joſephus* reprehends *Polybius* the Hiſtorian, for

Grot. in Matth. 25.

aſcribing the Death of *Antiochus* to Sacriledge intended, though not committed by him, τὸ γὰρ μηκέτι ποιῆσαι τὸ ἔργον βουλευσάμενον, οὐκ ἀξιοῖ τιμωρίας ἄξιον, 'For as long, *ſaith he*, as he did not 'actually execute his Intentions, he de'ſerv'd no Puniſhment: And that this was the old received Notion of Obedience, appears plainly enough from our Saviour's correcting this Miſpriſion, in the 5*th* of St. *Mat. Ye have heard*, ſaith he, *ver.* 21. *that it was ſaid by them of old time, thou ſhalt not kill*: If a Man did not actually murder another, he was thought to have kept within the Bounds of the Eighth Commandment, as indeed he did, as to the temporal Penalty annex'd to the Violation of it, which was then principally regarded; but our Lord tells them plainly, *ver.* 22. that the Guilt in this particular, lies as deep as the very Beginnings, the firſt Efforts and Sallies of an angry Mind towards a fooliſh Quarrel that may end in Blood; in which Senſe St. *John* affirms, that *whoſoever hateth his Brother is a Murderer*, is already ſo, tho his Sword be ſtill unſheath'd, and he has ſtab'd him only *in Effigie*. Again, ſays he,

he, to the ſame purpoſe, at the 27*th ver.* *Ye have heard that it was ſaid by them of old time, thou ſhalt not commit Adultery,* if a Man did but refrain from the actual embraces of a forbidden Bed, how keenly ſoever he debauch'd by the ſtrength of an impure imagination, yet he was, for all that, in their notion of obedience, a chaſt and modeſt Man ſtill, but our Saviour tells them a Rape may be committed in the Fancy, and Adultery by a wanton Glance. And that this Jewiſh notion of Obedience, is not yet altogether antiquated under Chriſtianity, ſeems but too evident from that trite proverbial ſaying amongſt us; that *thoughts are free*; as if when Men durſt not let looſe their hands, or their tongues, to work wickedneſs, yet they might give their deſires and imaginations their full ſwing; and muſe, and wiſh, and contrive, and pleaſe themſelves with the Invention and Images of thoſe things which they think it not ſafe to put in execution; whereas, on the contrary, the Laws of our Lord preſcribe to our affections, ſet bounds to our fancies, regulate our deſires, direct our intentions, govern

our

our wiſhes, ſtrike at ſin in embrio, and check the firſt voluntary motions and tendencies of the mind to evil. Voluntary, I ſay, becauſe 'tis hard to imagine that thoſe *motus primò primi*, as the Schools ſpeak, thoſe firſt ſtirrings of Concupiſcence which come not within the verge and compaſs of the Will, ſhould fall under the laſh and cenſure of the Law; a Souldier is not puniſhed for having an enemy to encounter, but for not doing his duty to repel his aſſaults, if, inſtead of watching and re-repreſſing his motions, he rather entertains him, then, but not till then, let the Law go upon him. God will certainly puniſh no Man for an imperfection that is not in his power to prevent, and which he did not himſelf voluntarily contract, will not call us to an account for being proper Subjects of the Operations of his Grace, but for miſ-uſing it, and will not require it at any Man's hands that he has the *Seeds* of evil ſcatter'd in his compoſition, but for ſuffering them to *fructifie* in the ſoil. However, it muſt ſtill be own'd that as to all the irregular motions of the inner Man, that fall under the diſpoſal

of

of our Wills, God hath concluded them all under ſin, that, by *the wicked Man's forſaking his thoughts*, the numberleſs vain thoughts that fly up and down his mind; he might the *more abundantly pardon*, Iſ. 55. v. 7. accordingly the ſame Prophet tells us of thoſe that *err in Spirit*, *Solomon* of thoſe that err in imagining evil, *Prov.* 14. 22. and *Micah* denounces woe to *the Deviſers of Iniquity*. Hence the ſame wiſe King of *Iſrael* tells us in one place, that *the thought of fooliſhneſs is ſin*; in another place, that *they err who deviſe Evil*; in a third, that *the thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord*; as his Father *David* had before obſerv'd of ſome that *their inward parts were very wickedneſs*, and tells us of others that *in their heart work wickedneſs*, hence again it is that St. *Peter* requires *Simon Magus to repent of the thoughts of his heart* (for what is the ſubject of our Repentance but our Sins,) that St. *Paul* requires us to *bring into Captivity every thought to the obedience of Chriſt*, which ſuppoſes that of themſelves they are naturally rebellious; that our Saviour reprehends the Phariſees for *thinking Evil*, and affirms

Iſ. 29. 24.
21.
Prov. 24. 9.
Prov. 14. 22.
Prov. 15. 26.
Pſal. 5. 9.
Pſal. 58. 2.
Acts 8. 22.
2 Cor. 10. 4.
Matt. 9. 4.
Matt. 15. 18, 19.

of Matt. 5.

of *Evil Thoughts* that *they defile the Man*, as well as when they ſhoot forth into the exterior actions of Murder, Adultery, *&c.* The very intention and deſire whereof he elſewhere equals with overt Tranſgreſſions of the kind. The reaſon of all is, that God being the Father of the Spirits of all fleſh, and the Kingdom of his Son a ſpiritual Kingdom too, 'tis congruous both to the Divine Nature, and ours, which is a ſtricture of his, that his Laws bear ſway in our ſpiritual part, in our Hearts and Souls, our Wills and Affections; for would we have an infinitely glorious Spirit ſerv'd by dull Fleſh and Blood only, and not rather like himſelf, in Spirit and in Truth, with thoſe prime productions, thoſe firſt born Sons of the immortal Nature in us? Has God made us Men, and would we pay him but the ſpiritleſs Homage of the animal part of us? Has he implanted a noble and immortal Principle of Life and Motion in us, and ſhall it not ſhare in our Obedience to him, and conſequently in the Guilt of the Tranſgreſſion of his Laws? He is the natural Lord of both Soul and Body, has

has bought them with a Price, and therefore all the Reaſon in the World the Obedience we pay him ſhould be commenſurate to the extent of his Purchaſe; ſo that if we have any juſt abhorrence of Sin in the true Latitude of the Divine conſtruction of it, we muſt govern our Thoughts, as well as obſerve meaſures in our words and actions.

Sect. 3.

BUT I ſhall farther evince the obligations that lie upon us to order our Thoughts aright, from ſuch conſiderations as ſeem to enhance the guilt of mental Sins above thoſe of the outward Man. For

I. THO' it be an argument that Sin has acquired an arbitrary power over us, and that the Law in our members has got the aſcendant over the Law of our Minds, when the ſeeds of evil Thoughts ſhoot forth into criminal Words and Actions, and in this reſpect the off-ſpring is worſe than the Parent, that is, 'tis worſe to ſpeak and do Evil than

than barely to think it; yet conſider the outward acts of Sin ſeparately and apart by themſelves, abſtracted from thoſe previous cogitations that give them Birth, and then the Sins of the mind are infinitely more criminal; for is it not worſe to proſtitute an immortal Soul to ſin and folly than a mouldering Carcaſe? The one is in the nature of the Artificer that models and contrives the Sin, the other but as the inſtrument as it were in its hand; and who reckons the murdering Sword as faulty as he that dar'd to ſheath it in his Brother? The one is as the mother of the ſpurious Brat, or the womb wherein Luſt firſt conceives, till the Heart grow big and the reckoning of the Sin be out; the other only comes and Midwives it into the World, and brings forth that which *brings forth Death*; and who ever thought theſe two equally criminal? Nay, ſet aſide the Guilt that derives from the corruption of the Mind, and why ſhould the worſt actions of the outward Man be reputed any more ſinful than thoſe of the Horſe and the Mule that have no underſtanding? for Sin is properly in the

the Soul only; the proper ſubject both of it, and of that Grace which corrects it.

II. OUR Thoughts are always *firſt in the Tranſgreſſion*, and ſo in reſpect of precedency, are more inexcuſable than outward actions; they are Ring-leaders in the Rebellion of Sin againſt God, and Perſons of that Character are generally made as exemplary in their Puniſhment, as they are for their Crime; theſe are the firſt begotten of their Father the Devil, the eldeſt Sons of original corruption, *the might and the beginning of the ſtrength* of Sin in us. *Out of the Heart proceed evil Thoughts, Murders*, &c. There the Son of violence firſt lays his ſcene of Blood, the Extortioner of Oppreſſion, the Adulterer of the forbidden Bed, and ſo of the reſt, for a Man firſt *deviſes Miſchief*, in the Pſalmiſt's language, and then *puts himſelf in a way that is not good, and abhorreth not evil*: Nay they are not only thus the Devil's puny Counſel, that open the Cauſe and make a Motion in behalf of Sin, but they are perpetually ſoliciting, abetting and pleading its Cauſe at the Bar

Bar of a debauch'd fancy and a bribed underſtanding, where many times they unhappily carry it; for 'tis no wonder that a corrupt Judge ſhould give it on their ſide. Thus do our Thoughts cater and *make Proviſion for the Fleſh to fulfill the Luſts thereof*, bring and recommend the beloved Object to the Heart, till it dotes and commits actual Folly with it; thus they lay in fuel for our Sins, and not only enkindle, but blow up the Fire into open flaming Wickedneſs; and therefore:

III. SINS of Thought are more criminal than outward Tranſgreſſions, in as much as the Guilt of the one derives from the other, for all Thoughts are Errors, as it were, of the firſt concoction, which affect Nature in all her ſubſequent operations of life. Thoughts are as the Principal, outward acts but as Acceſſories. The one is in the nature of the Cauſe, the other of the Effect, for *out of the abundance of the Heart does both the Mouth ſpeak* and the Hands act, and *out of it*, ſays the Wiſe Man, *are the Iſſues of Life*, and I add, of Death too. And who can blame the

Streams

Streams for their neceſſary partaking of the Pollutions of their Fountain? Thoughts then are the *Principle* of Spiritual Life, or Spiritual Death in us, that great leading Wheel within the Engine, which as when it moves regularly, it cauſes the outward *Hand* of our Words and Actions to *Point* right, ſo when 'tis out of courſe, it puts all in the like diſorder with it; for our Actions will be of a piece with our Thoughts, and no one acts like a Wiſe Man, who thinks like a Fool. *O Generation of Vipers*, ſays our Lord to the Phariſees, *how can ye, being Evil, think good Things*? For, *who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean*? Who can bring good Words or Deeds out of fooliſh, wandring, and unhallow'd Thoughts? for, *how ſhall a Man reap there where he has not ſow'd*? Can he from Weeds reap Grain, *gather Grapes of Thorns, or Figs of Thiſtles*?

IV. IF we govern not our Thoughts, they will govern us, or, to ſpeak more properly, will leave us without any true government of our ſelves, they are natural movers that need no wind-

ing up, but are inceſſant in their motion towards Good or Evil, and therefore if we take not care to determine them to proper Objects, they will run out upon any that come in their way, will haunt and dog us to the Table, to the Bed, to the Cloſet, to the Church, will be perpetually intruding, interpoſing, and interrupting us in our Duty, will either intercept all good motions, or diſtract and confuſe us in the performance of them, and to be ſure, will be moſt buſie and impertinent at the time of our Religious Services, when we are to compoſe our Souls to the ſevereſt ſobriety and intenſeneſs of Meditation.

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cordingly we find the Angels, *who kept not their first station, reserv'd in everlasting Chains under darkness to the Judgment of the great Day*, for Sins of this incorrigible kind. For suppose their Sin Pride and Ambition, Malice or Envy, or what you will, 'twas certainly transacted in the Mind, without the intervention of corporeal Efficiency, and deriv'd it's peculiar venom from the spirituality of its Nature. Mental Sins then were the first, and are still, considered in themselves, the most crying provocations.

Sect. 4.

Other Reasons why we should govern our Thoughts.

BESIDES what has been hitherto alledg'd on this behalf, the consideration of God's all-seeing Eye ought also to influence the Conduct of our Thoughts: They lie not indeed within the walk of Humane Justice, are without the ken of Humane inspection, no Eye can pry into the recesses of the Heart, but God sees, and knows, and

and reads their ſubtileſt Motions and darkeſt Intrigues, with greater perſpicacity than we do Men's outward Words and Actions: For *lo there is not a Thought*, not the motion of the leaſt Fibre in our Hearts, *but he knoweth it altogether, knoweth it afar off*, at the diſtance of Eternity it ſelf, e're we or our Thoughts had any other Being than in the Divine Idea. For *no Thought can be with-holden from him. Hell and Deſtruction are before him, how much more then the Hearts of the Children of Men?* And then how ſtrongly are we obliged to keep good Order there, ſince they are under the Eye of ſo intimate and accurate an Obſerver of their internal Motions, and ſubject to the inſpection of ſo true a Judge of good Diſcipline, and ſo ſevere an Avenger of bad? But I ſhall urge this Conſideration farther in its proper place, as a means to aſſiſt us in the ordering of our Thoughts aright. And therefore,

Job 42. 2.

Prov. 15. 11.

II. IN Order to this End, it would be conſidered, that God bears a ſpecial regard to the Obedience of our Hearts and Affections: For tho' bright and

ſhining Examples of Virtue diffuſe a luſtre round about them, promote the Divine Honour, and induce Men to Glorifie the great Father of ſuch burning Lights which is in Heaven, yet nothing is ſo unexceptionable a Demonſtration of the Power of Grace, and the Sincerity of our Hearts, as a conſcientious Care and Management of thoſe Thoughts that fly up and down in them; for where ſuch an Obedience is yielded to the Divine Commands as no Eye can pry into, but that which is ten thouſand times brighter than the Sun in its Zenith, it cannot poſſibly admit of the leaſt intermixture, or ſuſpicion of By-reſpects, but muſt be tender'd God purely for his own Sake, from a true Spiritual Principle of Life, and in a Spiritual Manner; and then what Sacrifice can poſſibly be more acceptable to our Maker than the immediate iſſues and emanations of our Souls, when there is no Stander by, no Witneſs of what paſſes betwixt God and our Souls in private, no ſecular Conſideration that can poſſibly ingage us, nor temporal Rewards to induce, nor temporal Puniſhments to force us to the

the Diſcharge of ſo ſpiritual and hidden a Duty.

III. 'TIS a main Point of Wiſdom and Argument of good Underſtanding, to be able to order our Thoughts aright, and the acquiſition of that noble Character ſhould ſpur us on to this Diſcipline of our Minds: All the reaſonable World will allow him to be a Perſon of a vaſt compaſs of Underſtanding, who by foreſeeing and providing againſt the Exigencies of State, by knowing how to compound, temper, and qualifie the different Intereſts, Paſſions, and Perſwaſions of Men, *&c.* prudently adminiſters a Government; and if ſo, no leſs will he deſerve the Character, who governs his Thoughts well; for they are a great People for number, and as mutinous and diſorderly as the moſt tumultuous Rabble; ſo that they *who rule well*, in this Senſe too, *are worthy of double Honour.*

IV. AND Laſtly, Let the Conſideration of the noble and dignified Nature of our Thoughts induce us to an orderly Management of them: for they

they are Beams of that Light which is inacceſſible, the immediate Fruits and eldeſt Sons of that immortal Parent in us, which is nearly allied to the Divinity it ſelf; and how then can we poſſibly be ſo inſenſible of our own high Character, who were framed after the Image of the Immortal God, and are deſigned to be made more ample partakers of his Nature, as to lay out our Time and our Pains ſo buſily as we do, in the Management of a Family, acquiring an Eſtate, and ſupporting and adorning a mouldering Carcaſe, and yet totally diſregard the Menage of our Thoughts, which are the Pride and Glory of our Nature? For wherein elſe, but in this thinking, reaſoning Power, do we differ from the Inhabitants of our Stable or our Kennel? And as this in general diſcriminates our Nature from theirs, ſo, I had almoſt ſaid, does one Man as much differ from, and excel another, by how much he is the better Maſter of his Thoughts, and can lay them out to more generous purpoſes: If therefore we have any juſt Senſe of the Dignity of our Humane Nature, and would advance

advance and improve that part of us which is properly the Man, we muſt manage thoſe Thoughts, by which we manage all things elſe.

CHAP. II. Sect. 1.

HAVING thus endeavour'd to lay before Men the Obligations they are under to order their Thoughts aright, I ſhall in the next place point out ſeveral of thoſe Infirmities, Irregularities, and Defects, that are incident thereto, whereby it will more particularly appear, how vain, and frivolous, and ſinful they are. The Multiplicity of Objects, and the great variety of thoſe Motions whereby the Mind entertains her ſelf with them, renders it next to impoſſible to take in this Argument in ſuch a Latitude, as to be able to deſcend to minute Particulars; I ſhall therefore content my ſelf to inſtance in ſome more general Defects and Weakneſſes of the thinking Power in us, leaving it to every Man, who expects a more exact Draught of them, to attend to the Motions

tions of his own Mind, and to follow the Jant of his Thoughts after those Objects that keep them most company.

I. ALL Thoughts of our Hearts are undoubtedly vain that are employed about Criminal Objects, as the Gratification of any of our Lusts, *&c.* For the sinfulness of the Object imparts its Guilt to the Act of the Mind that is conversant about it; no Man can think of accomplishing a Revenge, a Fraud, a Murder, *&c.* and be innocent.

Namque scelus in se tacitum qui cogitat ullum,
Facti crimen habet

is the voice of both *Pagan* and *Christian* Theology. St. *Paul*, *Rom.* 13. requires us not to *make Provision*, as we render it, *for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof*, μὴ προνοιαν ποιεῖσθαι, says the Original, *i. e.* not to contrive or project beforehand how to accomplish our wicked Intentions; for our Thoughts always lay the Plot, before it thickens into the last

laſt Scene of actual Execution; but this Head is ſo plain, that I need not longer inſiſt upon it.

II. THOSE Thoughts muſt needs be very vain and fooliſh, whoſe Subject matter is vain and trifling: 'Tis not every ones Portion, to have their Minds fraught with ſolid and ſubſtantial Lading; ſome carry nothing but Ballaſt, dull Heavy Conceptions; others carry too great a Sail, are overlight and aery; others Trade only in Toys, in News, Fancies, Faſhions, Apes and Peacock-feathers; neither Nature nor Education has furniſhed all Men with proper Materials, for their Thoughts to work upon; and therefore, ſince the common Activity of their Minds will not ſuffer them to be wholly idle, what wonder if they take up with unmanly Arguments, and converſe in their Thoughts with their Dogs or their Horſes, with the Paſſages of the Theatre, the imaginary Exploits of ſome Hero in Romance, or the like, thinking to no purpoſe rather than not think at all.

III. As

III. As ſuch Thoughts as theſe are *materially* vain, becauſe their Objects are nothing worth, ſo other Thoughts may be ſaid to be *formally* ſo, *i.e.* when tho the *matter* of them is good, yet the *manner* and *turn* of the Heart in thinking of them is not as it ſhould be. Thus, the ſame numerical Prayer may be a ſweet ſmelling ſavour from one Man's Mouth, and an Abomination from anothers; where, though the matter of the Service is one and the ſame, yet the different *turn of* Heart and Mind makes it, *formally* conſidered, a quite different performance. So, again, a wicked man may think of the ſame God, with a good one; where though the matter of his Thoughts be equally good with the others, yet his Thoughts are vain, becauſe without Spiritual Life and Vigour in them, whilſt, by reaſon of ſuch Qualifications, the others are accepted; and 'tis very poſſible for a wicked Man to have a thouſand *materially* good Thoughts, and yet go to Hell in the midſt of them: He may think of God, and yet he never have the

the more Service of him; he may think of Repentance, and yet continue the ſame impenitent Man he was; he may think of Death and Judgment, and yet his Life be never the better. 'Tis hard if in ſuch a vaſt Lottery of Thoughts, as is played at in our Minds, a very wicked Man have not now and then a good Chance; and yet if he is not renewed in the Spirit of his Mind, and both the Principle and Courſe of his Actions better'd by them, they are none of his own Thoughts, but Injections properly, with which his Soul is haunted; and ſuch thinking of good things will be ſo far from abating a Man's Guilt, that they will inhaunce his Puniſhment. In fine, as every Thought of Sin is not ſinful (for a Man may think of it with Abhorrence) ſo neither does every Thought of Piety and Religion come under the Character it pretends to. For where the Heart is carnal and vain, it deſecrates every good Motion thrown into it from without, and like a vitiated Stomach, inſtead of affording ſolid Nutriment to the Soul, turns all it meets with into the morbific Matter of Sin.

IV. 'TIS

IV. 'TIS a great Vanity of our thinking Power, to leave the plain beaten Road of profitable and ſubſtantial Knowledge, for the narrow, crooked Paths of nice and uſeleſs Speculations. The Word and Works of the Almighty, together with the Operations of our own Minds, the Wonders of the greater and leſſer World, afford more ſolid Stuff for our Thoughts to work upon, than the wideſt Capacity was ever able to go through with; and yet ſuch is the natural Activity of our Minds, and the fruitleſs Curioſity of ſome Men's, that they chooſe to *refine* upon them, commonly beyond Uſefulneſs, often beyond Senſe, affect *Sciences falſly ſo call'd*, and ſpin Cobweb Notions out of their own Brains, fit only to catch Flies with. Thus has the inſipid Nicety of the Schools mangled, and even *crucified* the Word of God, putting on it a Crown of Thorns too, the barbarous Spinoſities of their own Inventions; and made the plain intelligible Doctrine of believing in God, and living well, a Torture and Rack to the Brains of the Learned, and Conſciences

ſciences of the Ignorant. They have thinn'd the Doctrine of Jeſus into the Fineneſs and Air of the Metaphyſicks of *Ariſtotle*, and made their Schools as great an Aſylum for *the Diſputers of this World*, as their Churches are for the Murderer, or other Malefactor. And how ſhould Men gather Grapes of ſuch Thorns, and Figs of ſuch Thiſtles as theſe? Such Brambles of Diſpute may tear and rent one's Mind in paſſing through them, but can never edifie it.

V. 'TIS another vain Thought to imagine we can bring about our Projects, without having God in our Thoughts, or by contrary means to what he has appointed: Thus the Jews, as God complains by *Jeremy*, in the beginning of his Propheſie, had *forgotten him days without number*, and were always projecting with themſelves, without taking him into the Conſult, by what means they might ſtave off or elude the Captivity threatned them; in neglect of that only means of ſincere Repentance he preſcribed them; upon which account it is, that he requires *Jeruſalem, to waſh*

Jerem. 4. 14.

her Heart from wickedneſs, that ſhe might be ſaved, and asks *how long her vain Thoughts ſhall lodge within her.* They not only feigned to themſelves, that *Jeruſalem*, the City Royal of the Almighty Monarch of the World, was impregnable; that the Temple of the Lord there was a ſufficient Sanctuary to them, againſt all their Enemies; and that it was impoſſible for *Abraham*'s Seed to be in Bondage, to any Power upon Earth (in all which vain Imaginations they were confirm'd by the falſe Prophets that abounded moſt when the State was moſt corrupt) but that if they were at any time attack'd by the *Chaldeans*, they would ſtrengthen themſelves in the ſtrength of *Pharaoh*, by entring into a Confederacy with *Egypt*; tho' God had denounc'd ſeveral Woes long before againſt that Project. And how common a thing it is for Men to leave the mighty Counſellor out of the Cabinet, to truſt in an Arm of Fleſh, and purſue the Maze and Labyrinth of their own Devices, in accompliſhing the Deſigns they have upon the Anvil, we need no other, and can have no better Argument to convince

vince us, than our own Experience of the wicked Projects this Day set on foot by the grand Incendiary of *Europe*. There is no Subject doubtless, whereon our Thoughts are more busily imployed, than in framing and contriving those Designs we have under the Sun; and yet, which proves the extream Vanity of 'em, for the most part to little or no purpose. For, *Man's goings are of the Lord*, how much soever he thinks them of himself; and how then, as the wise King asks the Question, *can a Man understand his own ways?* We project, devise, propose Ends, prosecute, apply Means; and yet all the while are managed, acted, and, as often as the Divine Wisdom pleases, over-ruled and defeated by an invisible Hand behind the Curtain; for, *I know, O Lord*, says the Prophet *Jeremy*, *that the way of Man is not in himself, 'tis not in Man that walketh to direct his own steps.* And in *Isaiah* he has particularly declared Wo to them who *take Counsel but not of Him, who ask, but not at his Mouth*; the Practice of the Statesmen amongst his own People in the Case before mention'd;

Jer. 10. 23.

Isa. 30 1, 2.

and for which Reaſon, as he there threatens, he afterwards made the Strength of *Pharaoh* (wherein they truſted) *their Shame, and their Truſt in the Shadow of* Egypt *their Confuſion.* For in the excellent Language of the Apoſtle upon this Argument: *The Wiſdom of this World is Fooliſhneſs with God: For, it is written, he taketh the Wiſe in their own Craftineſs. And again, the Lord knoweth the Thoughts of the Wiſe that they are vain.*

V. 3.

1 Cor. 3. 19, 20.

VI. THERE is another Vanity of Thought, which our Lord himſelf takes ſuch expreſs Notice of, and that in his excellent Sermon on the Mount, that it muſt not here be diſregarded by us; and that is an intemperate Solicitude and Anxiety of Thought, for the things of this preſent Life; the Vanity whereof he evinces with a force of Argument, and Strain of Words, like himſelf, truly Divine, and which will therefore abundantly ſupercede any further Illuſtration of the matter: For, Firſt, he argues *a majori ad minus. Is not Life more than Meat, and the Body than Raiment?* i. e. Will not

Mat. 6. 23.

not he, think you, who firſt kindled in you the vital Flame, furniſh you with Fuel to keep it in? Will not he who gave you a Body, give you a Covering to it? Then Secondly, he reaſons from Inſtances of God's Providence to Creatures of a Nature far inferiour to Man, from his *feeding the Fowls of the Air*; *and his Cloathing the Lillies of the Field.* Thirdly, he ſhews the Vanity of this Anxiety of Thought, from its Inſignificancy and Ineptitude to the attainment of what we propoſe to our ſelves from it; for *which of you*, ſays he, *by taking thought can add one Cubit to his Stature*; or, as others expound the place, can with all his Anxiety, add the leaſt proportion to his Age, or extend the Period of his Life. And then as he adds, in St. *Luke*'s Relation of the Paſſage, *If ye are not able to do that thing which is leaſt, why take ye Thought for the reſt?* If ye are not ſufficient of your ſelves to preſerve your Lives till to Morrow, why ſo infinitely buſie to make Proviſion for them? Fourthly, he tells 'em plainly, that for his Followers to lay out their Thoughts ſo immoderately about the Affairs of this

V. 26.

V. 28.

V. 27.

Life, is to be ſtill upon the ſame level with a Gentile Spirit; *For after all theſe things do the Gentiles ſeek, beſides that your Heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of all theſe things:* And he is not ſo unnatural a Parent, as to let his Children go deſtitute of the neceſſary Accommodations of Humane Life. Thus has our Lord himſelf, in an ample and extraordinary manner, expos'd the Vanity of this miſimployment of our Thoughts to our Hands, and we ſhall have occaſion to inſiſt farther on the Argument hereafter.

V. 32.

VII. THERE is a certain Dulneſs or Stupidity incident to the thinking Power, when the Mind does not go, but, like a Clock with the Plummets off, ſtands ſtill, is heavy and dumpiſh, and has no diſtinct Conceptions of any Objects let into it, but nodds and falls aſleep, as it were, and runs into another World, as Men in Dreams do. And this, I conceive, is generally occaſion'd, where it is not owing to a natural Defect, either by Guilt within, or Troubles and Dangers from without. Firſt, Guilt within is always

always apt to confuſe our Reaſonings, choak and break in upon our Apprehenſions of Things, and ſtrangle our Thoughts; it always lies croſs and heavy in our Mind, and deads that Chearfulneſs and Alacrity of Thinking that Innocence naturally gives it. And then, Secondly, for Dangers and Diſaſters, they fix the Mind upon the Contemplation of the Object that frights or diſquiets it, render a Man's Spirit dead, as it were, within him, congeal his Powers, make them ſtiff and deſtitute of Motion, ſo that a Man has not for that time the Command of his Reaſon, to look about and provide fit Means to eſcape the Danger that threatens him.

VIII. 'TIS another Miſcarriage in the Management of our Thoughts, when we propoſe no one good and fixed End of Life, for the ſupream Object of our Purſuit. Some have working Imaginations, never idle, always ſtickling, but as good never a whit as never the better, as the Phraſe is. For it is not enough for a Man to have this or that particular End in his View, as

Opportunity preſents, and his Occaſions require: But he muſt have a further and a fairer Mark, at which he aims and directs them all: A Man may make this or that Harbour, as occaſion ſerves in his Voyage, but ſure every Motion he makes is in Subſerviency to gain ſome one determinate Port of Traffick; for otherwiſe, as the one ſails uncertainly, and to very little purpoſe, ſo the other thinks and lives but from Hand to Mouth, as we ſay; by Breaks and by Parcels, without any Dependance and Coherence in Thought or Action; he purſues no one Road of Life, but takes into every By-path, and his Thoughts, like a wanton Spaniel in its Range, run after every accidental Game that comes in their way.

Eſt aliquid quò tendis, & in quod dirigis arcum?
An paſſim ſequeris corvos teſtâque lutoque
Securus quò pes ferat, atque ex tempore vivis?

IX. ANOTHER ſinful Weakneſs

neſs of our Thoughts is ſeen in their being ſo much at the Command of our Paſſions; as, if you obſerve it, they generally are; for tho Thoughts are originally antecedent to our Paſſions, as a Man muſt firſt think before he can be affected with Joy, Grief, Anger, *&c.* yet when theſe Paſſions are once up, they command the Thoughts that made them, and imploy them wholly on thoſe Objects that raiſe and affect them: So that look what Affections bear the Sway in a Man's Heart, that way his Thoughts will take their Courſe: As for inſtance, tho a Man muſt firſt think before he can be angry, yet when that Paſſion is once up, it lays out for that time all the Thoughts of an unſanctified Heart upon the Injury, Affront or Injuſtice done one, and the Means whereby we may effectually reſent and revenge it. So again, when Love and Deſire have taken poſſeſſion of us, be the Object what it will, our Minds are always muſing on it; *Can a Maid forget her Ornaments, or a Bride her Attire,* ſays *Jeremy*, the things they love and delight in? No: our Thoughts are always preſent with their beloved Object,

Object, run after it and into it, and repreſent it to us with far more Advantages than it really carries along with it. And the like might be ſaid of any other of our Affections: They diſcompoſe our Minds, confuſe our Souls, and, like a too powerful Enemy breaking in upon us, put the numerous Army of our Thoughts into diſorder; ſo that when the Heat of the Battel is over, a Man looks back upon the Defeat with Sorrow and Regret; and is at a vaſt expence of Trouble to rally up his ſcatter'd good Thoughts again, and to put them once more in a Poſture of Defence againſt thoſe inteſtine Diſturbers of his Quiet. Now, I ſay, this is a ſignal Weakneſs in our Thoughts, to be thus carried away by our Paſſions, at their Will and Pleaſure; for our thinking Power was given us, amongſt other Ends, to regulate and preſcribe to our Paſſions, and not our Paſſions to them.

BUT ſince they were given us for good Ends and Purpoſes, and we are not required to eradicate, but to govern them, therefore the Apoſtle's Rule

Rule is the proper Remedy in this Caſe, *viz.* That we ſet *our Affections on things above, not upon things that are upon the Earth.* For our Thoughts will partake of the Qualities and Genius of our Affections; if the one are Heavenly and Divine, the other will on courſe be ſo too. *David*, ſpeaking of the Bleſſed Man, tells us, *Pſal.* 1. *ver.* 2. *That his Delight is in the Law of the Lord*; and then adds, that *in his Law doth he meditate Day and Night*; and in another place, profeſſing of himſelf that *he loved the Divine Law*, he affirms likewiſe, that it was *his Meditation continually.* For Men naturally meditate on what they love and delight in: and in *Malachy*, the *Fear of God*, and *thinking* upon his Name, are joyned together. *Pſal.* 119. 97. *Malach.* 3. 16.

X. THERE is another ſinful Vanity of our Thoughts, in making the Concerns of other Men their Objects, when they make Incurſions into their Neighbour's Affairs, break down his Incloſures, and impertinently ramble through all his Concernments: For ſuch is the Curioſity, or Malice, or Envy, or I know not well what to call it,

it, of ſome Perſons, that they can entertain their Thoughts (as they do their Company too upon occaſion) much more agreeably with other Men's matters than their own; and even whilſt they keep at Home, incur the Guilt of their Character, whom St. *Paul* ſtiles *Buſie Bodies, Tatlers, wandring* (in their Thoughts) *from Houſe to Houſe*: The Practice of thoſe generally, who, in their own Phraſe, have nothing to do, as wanting Matter, I conceive, in themſelves for their Thoughts to feed and exert upon.

NOW this Employment of our Thoughts is not only ſilly, and impertinent to any good purpoſe of Life, but 'tis criminal too, in as much as every Man, let him have as little Secular Buſineſs as he will, yet has Work enough upon his Hands, the Improvement of his Mind, the Government of his Paſſions, and the Salvation of his Soul, to take up all his Thoughts, all his Time and Leiſure; and therefore it muſt needs be Sin in a Man, in neglect of his own proper Buſineſs, to let the precious Sand of his Thoughts run out upon

upon other Mens, where they are not call'd, and have nothing to do.

AND as it is a Vanity of our Thoughts to gad ſo much abroad amongſt our Neighbours Affairs, where they have no buſineſs; ſo are they no leſs vain in this, that when they ſtay at Home and turn their Eyes inward, they are apt to overlook the Failings and Imperfections of their Owners. Every Man has his *Fort* and his *Foible*, his ſtrong and his weak Part, his ſeeing and his blind Side; and whilſt the Eyes of our Minds view the one, even the leaſt *Mote* of Excellency in us, with infinite Complacency and Satisfaction, they commonly wink ſo hard at the other, that they let *Beams* themſelves eſcape their Obſervation. For every one that *doth evil hateth the Light* of his own Mind, *neither cometh to the Light*, *leſt his Deeds ſhould be reproved*: For Self-Love is ever ready to take Care that a Man fall not out with himſelf. Mat. 7. 8.

Laſtly, ANOTHER leading Imperfection of our Thoughts, is obſervable in

in their Levity or want of Fixation; whereby we become *as unſtable as Water, and ſhall not excell: The Heart of the Fooliſh is like a Cart Wheel*, ſays the wiſe Son of *Sirach, and his Thoughts are like a roling Axle-Tree*: Glib and voluble in their Motions, nothing ſo volatile and aery as they; they ſtream and ſhoot in an inſtant from one corner of the Earth to another, ſore as high as Heaven, and dive as deep as Hell, curvet and caper over the whole Creation, and as if that were too little for them, flie beyond the limits of the Univerſe, and the bounds of time, to Eternity and Imaginary Spaces. Like wanton Spaniels they ſet out with you, and perhaps wait on you home again, but Range every Field, and purſue every Game that comes in the interim in their way; or, like ſome reſtleſs Birds, they no ſooner light upon one Object, than they preſently take wing and fly off to another, by which means there happens many times ſo quick a Succeſſion, or rather indeed ſuch a tumultuary Jumble of Ideas in our Heads, that we loſe our ſelves as in a Maze, get into a Labyrinth of our own making,

ing, and can hardly remember the Gole from which our Thoughts firſt ſtarted, ſo that if we look'd them over again, and could but trace them in their Rambles and Excurſions from one Object to another, we ſhould find them many times no more coherent than our Dreams, or the Rovings, and extravagant apprehenſions of Mad-men; and perhaps the main difference betwixt the Mad-man in Bedlam, and the other muſing in his Study, lies in this, that the one is ſo fooliſh as to utter his Conceptions as they throng into his Head, and the other ſo wiſe as to conceal them.

NOW there may be ſeveral cauſes of this Imperfection; if we will trace it up to its Spring Head, we muſt go as far back as the Fall of *Adam* for it, when the Mind leaving the purſuit of the chief and ſupream Good, about which it regularly moved, as about its proper Center, and propoſing to it ſelf the acqueſt of infinite other falſe and fictitious Goods in its ſtead, it became, like a wandring Star, planetary and erratic in its Motions.

AGAIN

AGAIN we may find another Cauſe of this in our own Compoſition; we are all fearfully and wonderfully made up of two very difficult Parts, Soul and Body, and yet ſo, that the Operations of the Soul do in a great meaſure depend upon the Temperament of the Body; now the great Inſtruments in our Rational, as well as Animal Operations, are thoſe ſubtile Parts of the Blood call'd Spirits, which in the very Conſtitution of ſome Perſons, thoſe eſpecially of a Sanguine Complexion, being of a fine and light Contexture, do neceſſarily cauſe a like Levity of the Mind in thinking, for we cannot poſſibly help apprehending after their Motions and Impreſſions.

AND as this volatility of Mind is natural to ſome Conſtitutions, ſo may ſeveral Accidents produce it in others, a Blow upon the Head, a Diſtemper in the Brain, or Intemperance may put the Blood into ſuch a Preternatural ferment, and ſo agitate and confuſe the Spirits, that there will neceſſarily

rily enſue a like Levity and Confuſedneſs of the Mind in thinking.

BUT that which carries the moſt general and principal ſtroke in this Affair, is certainly the Wantonneſs of our Imagination, which is often preſenting our Underſtandings with fine Pictures and Images of things, which inveigle our Minds to run a gadding after them, ſet the Spirits agog, divert the main Stream of our Thoughts from their primary Channel, and let them run out, like Water ſpilt upon the ground, upon forreign and improper objects. So that even the moſt thoughtful Men many times are not able to direct one line of Thoughts ſtreight on, but loſe ſight of the Subject they at firſt began with. For imagination is a buſie reſtleſs ſort of power that's ſeldom or never idle, but moſt of all exerts its Activity, when the Underſtanding is lazy and out of imployment. No ſooner does the tempting Object from without, Honour or Pleaſure, or Profit, make its way through the doors of our Senſes to our Underſtanding, but this faculty, like a Maſter of the

Ceremonies, uſhers it in, harangues upon its Excellencies, and deſires it may have audience; if a Man hankers after Honour, and his Temper is Ambitious, the imagination preſently lifts him up to one of the higheſt *Pinacles* of the Court, ſhews him *all the Kingdoms* of greatneſs, together with Followers, Dependants, Attendants, Retinue, and the other *Glories of them*, ſo that the Man's Thoughts are always mounting, making Ladders, as it were, to himſelf, and contriving how to climb higher. So, again if an Object of profit has poſſeſs'd the Mind, the Fancy preſently begins to ſurvey the Land, to ſet off the value and conveniency of Goods laid up for many Years, and falls a telling over the Money, as it were, before your Eyes, to ingage you in its purſuit, and makes your *Thoughts*, in the Prophets language, *go after your Covetouſneſs.* So, again, if the Idea of a pleaſurable Object has ſtoln in at your Eyes, the ſame faculty preſents you with more Charms than any one elſe can ſee in it, ſummons all the Senſes to bear witneſs to the ſeveral gratifications it affords them,

them, and recommends the Object ſo long, till your deluded Thoughts play the Adulterer, and commit Folly with it; and in all theſe caſes, like a flattering Painter, draws the Picture of the Object far more beautiful and exact than ever the Original could pretend to, and by theſe means breaks off the connexion of our Thoughts, cuts them ſhort of the Object they ſhould purſue, and renders them light and deſultory.

NOW this defect, as far as 'tis purely caſual, or as far as 'tis natural, owing to our complex'd Conſtitution of Soul and Body, cannot be criminal, but then comes certainly under that Denomination, and is Sin to us, where the natural Infirmity is countenanc'd and indulg'd, eſpecially in Divine Worſhip, or the defect is voluntarily acquired by Intemperance, or the like.

AND now that we are upon this Head, it may not be improper here to ſubjoyn other Vanities of our Thoughts that are principally owing to the ſame cauſe of a wanton and ludicrous imagination: For indeed this Power carries

ries a mighty ſtroke with us, influencing, in a great meaſure, the Determination of the Judgment, the Choice of the Will, the purſuit of the Affections, and in conſequence of all theſe, the execution of our Bodily Powers.

Sect. 2.

AND here I ſhall firſt take notice of that Error of Thought it occaſions in us, when we apply our ſelves to the Conſideration of ſpiritual and immaterial ſubſtances. For being uſed to think by the intervention of Ideas from our Senſes, which are converſant only about material Objects; the imagination, which receives theſe impreſſions from our Senſes, is apt to draw the ſame groſs Images of immaterial Beings, as of Spirits, Angels, and of God himſelf; and we being uſed to view the Objects we think of as they are repreſented in the Looking-Glaſs of Fancy, are apt fooliſhly to conclude, that the Originals reſemble thoſe Pictures of them, and ſo make no diſtinction in our Conceptions betwixt material and immaterial Objects; hence it

is

is that we conceive Angels to be like young Boys, and the great God like a grave Old Man; that very vanity of *imagination*, as the Apoſtle terms it, of which the Gentile World ſtood guilty, in *changing the Glory of the incorruptible God, into an Image made like corruptible Man*, &c. Rom. 1. 21. 23.

II. WE ſhall conſider that vanity which Fancy imparts to our Thoughts, in relation to ſenſual and voluptuous Objects; for hereby Men Frame and Figure to themſelves thoſe unlawful Enjoyments which 'tis not in their power to put in Execution, Courting, and Addreſſing, and Complementing, and making fine Speeches in their Minds to ſpeculative Idols of their own framing; fond Ixions that imbrace the Clouds and Vapours of their own Luſts, *filthy* waking *Dreamers* that defile, not the Fleſh only, but when that's out of imployment, commit inceſt with the Daughters of their own imagination; an Argument of great depravity of Soul this, for Men to make procurers of their Thoughts, to proſtitute their very Spirits, and put out Conſcience,

that *Candle of the Lord*, that all may appear like Night about them, whilſt they commit their Deeds of Darkneſs, their imaginary Rapes, Whoredoms and Debaucheries. We have the voice of Scripture for it, that this *Spiritual Wickedneſs* is Adultery, without any farther progreſs in the Fact. But

III. THERE is yet a worſe vanity of the Thoughts, if poſſible, in relation to the ſame voluptuous Objects, and that is a Repetition of theſe ſinful Pleaſures in the Mind, when they are paſt and gone, and have been really tranſacted. When Men are not ſatisfi'd with the Harveſt they have already reap'd, but muſt have a latter Marth, as it were, a ſecond crop of delight in their Thoughts and Imaginations; muſt renew the filthy ſcene in their own Boſoms, erect a Stage there, and their Fancies act over the ſame brutal Comedies again, with freſh Satisfaction. The fault this, generally, of overgrown and diſabled Sinners, dry Trees that have green Leaves, tho' they are paſt bearing fruit, Men whoſe Vices have left them, not through

through Supernatural Grace, but Natural Infirmity, who lamenting not their Sins, but their Impotence, endeavour, by the ſtrength of an impure Imagination yet living in them, to conjure up the Ghoſt of their old departed Luſts, to make the dry Bones live, and give their dead Sins a Reſurrection from one Grave, whilſt they themſelves are ready to drop into another.

SO, again, this mental Repetition of ſinful Acts is ſeen in ſeveral other Caſes, as when a Man has over-reach'd and defrauded his Brother in any kind, he is apt inwardly to applaud himſelf for the Villany, to walk over thoſe ſteps again in his Mind, by which he circumvented him, and repeat the diſhoneſty with as much ſatisfaction as he committed it; ſo Men that are of bitter and implacable Spirits, will act over their Revenge again in their Thoughts, make the Wounds already given their Adverſary, bleed afreſh, in their own Minds, and ſtab him once more in Effigie; and ſo of other Vices.

NOW a Man muſt be arriv'd at a very high meaſure of Impenitency and Impiety, who thus indulges. One would think it were enough for Men to commit the outward Acts of Sin with greedineſs; but to repeat them with delight again, is to approve of them upon mature Advice, and boldly to declare againſt all Relentings and Repentance, which ever look with Horror, not with ſatisfaction, upon our by-paſt Evil Actions. The great Apoſtle makes it an Argument of a very wicked Diſpoſition, not onely to commit Sin, but to take pleaſure likewiſe in thoſe who do ſo, and if there be any difference in the Caſe, 'tis certainly the worſe to be pleas'd with ones ſelf for ſo doing. For every ſuch aftergame of internal Complacency is a freſh commiſſion of the Sin, ſtains the Soul with a new Guilt, and that ſo much the deeper, by how much 'tis the more criminal to ingage, not only the Powers of the Body to commit Sin, but the faculties of the Soul likewiſe to view and contemplate and repeat it.

IV. ANO-

IV. ANOTHER Vanity of Thoughts, chargeable upon a wild and ungovern'd Imagination, is obſerveable in Men's framing fine Schemes, and Images, and ſuppoſitions of things, and then pleaſing themſelves with them, as if they were Realities, and they actually enjoyed them. For the Fancy has a ſort of power of Creation, and can hold up the Images of Idols of its own making, fictitious Honours, Riches, *&c.* till the fooliſh Heart falls down and worſhips them. Thus you ſhall have Men placing themſelves in ſome high Poſt, or eminent Station, or plentiful Fortune, and then amuſing themſelves with ten Thouſand idle Projects, how they would behave themſelves in ſuch Circumſtances; what Figure they ſhould make, what Intereſt they would drive on, *&c.* Cutting out as much work for themſelves, as if they were in the actual poſſeſſion of the Fools Paradiſe, they have invented. Theſe and the like imaginations are the frequent entertainment of Melancholy and Hypocondriack Perſons, and perhaps the beſt of Men are apt now and

and then to fall into theſe ſort of awaking Dreams; our Minds are apt to ſpread wider than our Conditions, and we will now and then, when our Underſtandings are not better imployed, be Figuring as buſily to our ſelves, what we would do, if inveſted with ſuch an Honour, poſſeſſed of ſuch an Eſtate, *&c.* as if we were actually Maſters of them. Thus our Fancies project ſhadows, and we take them for ſubſtance; we firſt build Caſtles in the Air, and then our Thoughts proudly ſtrut through every Room of the imaginary Building; we frame an *Idol*, and then fall down and worſhip it, whilſt our *Idol*, in the Apoſtles definition of it, *is nothing*.

NOW this is not only a vanity and a weakneſs in our Thoughts, but a Sin too. Firſt, becauſe God hath provided better Objects for the entertainment of our Thoughts, than ſuch Chimeras. And,

2. BECAUSE that when our Minds thus ſtroul and ſtray beyond the Circumſtances the Divine Providence

dence has plac'd us in, it argues a ſort of Diſſatisfaction in us, with our preſent Condition, which is ever Criminal.

V. AS 'tis a great Vanity of the Mind thus to imploy its Thoughts in imaginary Suppoſitions, or in drawing Pictures, as it were, of things, and then taking them for Realities and Originals: So is it likewiſe a Weakneſs and Fondneſs in the thinking Power, owing likewiſe to a buſie Imagination, to dwell upon, and be ever contemplating a Man's own real Enjoyments, whether of Body, Mind, or Fortune. We are certainly our own greateſt Flatterers, and ſhould never be impos'd upon by others in this kind, did we not firſt delude and impoſe upon our ſelves. When God has bleſs'd Men with great Abilities of Mind, large Fortunes, or the like, they are always viewing themſelves in the flattering Looking-glaſs of their own Fancies, (like thoſe who ſpend half their time in Dreſſing) or many times it proves a Magnifying Glaſs, that repreſents their Enjoyments or Perfections in far larger

larger Dimenſions than what they have in reality. Thus the Men of Parts will be ever and anon amuſing and pleaſing themſelves with their own Notions and Productions, whereby as they are apt to over-rate their own Acquiſitions and Abilities, ſo are they inclin'd to undervalue and depreciate thoſe of other Men. For whilſt our Thoughts thus dwell upon our own Perfections, they are apt at the ſame time to ſit in Judgment too upon the ſuppos'd Imperfections of other Men, and thereupon fall immediately upon making Compariſons, and to be ſure bring in the Verdict on their own ſides. Thus, again, in the Caſe of large Revenues, Men, like the rich Fool in the Goſpel, are ever and anon taking an imaginary Survey of their Eſtates, an Inventory, as it were, of their Goods, telling them over, as Children do their Counters, or covetous Men their old Gold, when they ſing the ſoft Requiem to their Souls of Goods laid up for many Years, take thine Eaſe, eat, drink, and be merry. Thus, again, in caſe of Reputation, for Sanctity of Life, the ſtiff ſupercilious Phariſee pleas'd himſelf

himſelf mightily, you may conceive, with the Thoughts of his own imaginary Piety, and the Vogue he had amongſt the People upon that account, when his Gravity was pleas'd to thank God that he was not as other Men. Now, I don't think, that 'tis abſolutely ſinful in it ſelf, to view one's own Enjoyments of Fortune, Abilities of Mind, and other good Qualifications, and to give one's ſelf the Advantage, if it fairly appear on one's ſide, upon a juſt Compariſon (tho' great Care in the mean while ought to be had, that the miſtaken Charity of Self-love delude us not, in covering a multitude of our own Imperfections) for a ſober and temperate Perſon. For inſtance, when he compares himſelf with the Drunkard, or the chaſte Man with the Adulterer, or the knowing educated Man with the Ruſtic, cannot but think themſelves placed as far above the cheap and ſordid Level of the others, as the Cleanneſs and fair Proſpect of the top of the Hill is above the Mire and Dirt at the bottom. It not being indeed in the power of Men's Faculties ſo to ſtifle the Evidence of their Concep-

Conceptions, as to baulk all ſenſe of Advantage which they find upon the Compariſon. But here then lies the Vanity and Sinfulneſs of this Procedure of our Thoughts, that our Hearts are not thereby rais'd to a Thankfulneſs to Almighty God, as the free Donor of ſuch Gifts, Abilities, and Graces; but we are apt to terminate our Thoughts within our ſelves, where they work, and ferment, and leaven all our good Qualifications, by huffing us up with Pride.

VI. ANOTHER Vanity of our Thoughts, owing to the ſame Cauſe of an ungoverned Imagination, is ſeen in their Forwardneſs and Impatience of enjoying thoſe Objects we conceive agreeable to us; like a kind Friend, or eager Lover, that cannot ſtay at Home till the Perſon he longs for arrives, but takes Horſe to meet him, and bid him welcome on the Road: For how often do our Thoughts anticipate the Revenues, as I may ſay, of our actual Enjoyments, and, *Chamelion* like, live upon the *airy* Hopes of Fruition? Whence the Reaſon of that common Obſer-

Obſervation, that Expectation generally has the better of it, and Men meet not with that Satisfaction in the things they expected. For beſides the Emptineſs and Nullity that there naturally is in the Enjoyments of this World (they never being deſign'd to fill up the large Capacities of the Heart of Man) our Fancies are always repreſenting to us things more eligible than they are in themſelves; and our Thoughts have gone ſo often out before-hand, to meet and converſe with their beloved Object, that they have enjoyed and deflowred it already, and ſo have foreſtal'd the Satisfaction of Poſſeſſion.

Sect. 4.

WE will now, in the next place, inſtance in thoſe Defects which are obſervable of our Thoughts in relation to holy Things, and the Exerciſes of Devotion.

AND the firſt Weakneſs of our Thinking Power that I would take notice of on this Head, is the *Enthuſiaſm*

to

to which it is ſubject, when we cannot *govern* and *command* our Thoughts, cannot keep them *orderly* and within the Bounds of Sobriety, but they grow wild, and fly out into Imaginations of Viſions, Revelations, immediate Conferences with the Deity, extraordinary Gifts, *&c.* whilſt, generally, perhaps always in the latter Ages of the Church, ſuch Pretenſions derive not from that Supernatural and Divine Principle, to which they are aſcribed; but, to ſay no worſe of them here, from Cauſes purely Natural, as Conſtitution, Meditation, Diſcipline, Education, Diſtemper, *&c.* For, as for Conſtitution, who has not heard of the undoubted Effects of natural Melancholy in this kind? What ſtrange imaginary Scenes Men of this dark Complexion have ſo ſtrongly figured to themſelves, as firmly to believe their Reality, tho' as ridiculous and inexiſtent as any in their Dreams. And as for Contemplation, which improves the former Temper, what ſtudious Perſon has not obſerv'd, how wild and ungovernable his Thoughts grow upon profound Meditation, eſpecially if dwelling

dwelling upon a noble Subject, and exalted by a ſolitary Retirement. And then 'tis obvious to imagine, how a Man, during theſe confus'd Tranſports of his Soul, may be apt to aſcribe the Reſponces of his own bewildred Reaſon, as others do thoſe of their Natural Conſcience, to ſome extraordinary Principle without and above them. This doubtleſs, together with a frightful gloomy Diſcipline, (not to mention the Advantage the Devil takes of ſuch Occaſions) is the only rational Hypotheſis whereby to ſolve thoſe Viſions, and ſupernatural Conferences with the Divinity, pretended to by the Enthuſiaſtick Meſſalians of old, the rapturous and extatick Frenſies of the famous Founder of the Jeſuits, and ſome of his Diſciples; and, in ſhort, all the Legendary Traſh, treaſured up for the Advancement of the Romiſh Superſtition. For there's no doubt to be made, but that abundance of Zeal and Bigotry in Devotion, a contemplative Life, the privacy of a Cloiſter or a Cell, together with a melancholy Temper, which it either finds or makes, has made their *Prophets Fools*, (as *Hoſea* ſpeaks) and their *ſpiritual Men mad*: *Hoſ.* 9. 7.

For too much thinking has made more Mad-men than too little. If from theſe we deſcend to preternatural Cauſes of theſe counterfeit Operations of God's Spirit, Diſtempers, Experience will inform us what Raptures and Viſions are incident to Hyſterical and Hypocondriack Perſons. No leſs an Enthuſiaſt than *Mahomet* himſelf is ſaid to have owed all his pretended Divinity to that Sacred Diſeaſe, as the Ancients call'd it, an Epilepſy. *Caſaubon Of Enthuſiaſm*, tells us of thoſe, who, through a Hurt in their Brain, have fancied themſelves actually in Paradiſe; and of others, that amidſt the Tranſports of their Viſions and Revelations, have died of that which produced them, a Fever. And as to a certain extraordinary Gift, pretended to ſtill by ſome People, I believe, I could ſhew, that a Treaſure of Scripture-Phraſes, a voluble Tongue, and a warm Temper, gradually heated and inflamed by the Impetus of Delivery, together with a good Aſſurance before Men, and an odd ſort of Familiarity with God, has actually done the Feat with the greateſt Maſters of the Talent.

II. WE may obſerve a natural *Averſion* in our Thoughts to pious Meditation. When any Object preſents it ſelf, that carries Pleaſure, or Profit, or the Gratification of any of our ſenſual Appetites along with it, O how greedily do our Thoughts careſs, embrace, and bid it ten thouſand Welcomes! But when God, or Religion, or Death, or Judgment, or any ſuch grave and ſerious Subject proffers it ſelf to our Thoughts, how apt are they to ſlink away, hang back, and be ſhy; and after, it may be, a very ſhort Interview, and a cold Entertainment, diſmiſs thoſe Objects, make them ſtand by and give way to ſuch as are more entertaining and diverting? The one's a welcome Gueſt and old Acquaintance, the other meets with the formal Reception of a Stranger, or as of a Viſitant that is not agreeable. When we wind up our Minds to the higheſt Pin of Meditation on theſe Subjects, our Thoughts, after a very little ſtay there, preſently fall down again, we are impatient and uneaſie under the Stretch, and care not perhaps how ſoon Buſi-

neſs, or Company, or the like, ſtep in and ſet us at Liberty; ſo averſe naturally are our Thoughts, unleſs God has ſanctified our Hearts, to converſe with holy Objects.

III. OUR Thoughts, in regard of holy Duties, are apt to *miſ-time* and *miſ-place* themſelves, when, tho' they may be materially lawful and good in themſelves, yet they intrude impertinently, at a time not proper for them, when they are not call'd upon, and have no buſineſs in the Mind; like an over-officious Friend, who, tho' he means well, yet marrs a matter through the unſeaſonableneſs of his Interpoſal. To every thing, ſays *Solomon*, there is Time and Seaſon; and 'tis the *right ordering* of things, as to Time as well as Place, that renders them proper, and decent, and agreeable. A Souldier may mean very well, and do ſome acceptable Service by leaving his Rank, or quitting the Poſt aſſign'd him; and yet, for all his Succeſs, he becomes a Tranſgreſſor; and may be call'd to an Account for ſo doing: And juſt ſo it is with our Thoughts,

Thoughts, I mean particularly in our Religious Performances; they may be truly good in themſelves, yet if they are foreign to the matter in hand, ſtep in unſeaſonably, and break their Ranks, they are Criminals. So that when we are at our Devotions, 'tis not enough to bar out all ſinful and worldly Conceits from crowding in upon us, but we muſt ſtave off all other Thoughts that relate not to the matter in hand; for though a Thought, for inſtance, or purpoſe of doing ſome good Work, be in it ſelf Divine, yet 'tis a Queſtion whether or no the Spirit that ſuggeſts it at that time be Divine, becauſe it tends then only to diſtract us, and mar the Performance we are about, as Colour miſ-placed in the Face doth the Beauty: So then, God's Worſhip muſt be performed, not only externally, but internally too, in Decency and Order; and we muſt not offer that great Majeſty, who made all things in Weight and Meaſure, a tumultuary Jumble of Thoughts in our Homage to him. But as, in the Words of the Apoſtle, *He that is ingaged in the Miniſtry muſt wait on his Miniſtring, and he that Teacheth on*

Teaching, and he that Exhorteth on Exhortation, &c. So he that is at his Prayers, muſt attend to his Prayers, to the particular Petition before him; he that is giving Thanks to his Thankſgiving; he that is at Confeſſion to his Confeſſing, *&c.* directing all his Thoughts ſtreight upwards towards Heaven; and he that is at Sermon, ought, for that time, to apply his whole Thoughts to what is offer'd; and if any other Thoughts, howſoever lawful and good, pretend to interpoſe, muſt bid them come another time, for that he is now otherwiſe ingag'd, and not at leiſure.

IV. 'TIS another ſinful Infirmity in our thinking Power, that tho' we are willing to entertain pious Objects in our Hearts, yet we care not to *dwell* long upon them, ſo that they leave not thoſe Prints and Impreſſions behind them that ſtick and abide by us, perfume not the Heart with that due Fragrancy and Savour they ought to leave behind them, when they are paſt and gone; for tho we may not be ſo bad as thoſe, of whom it may be affirmed,

firmed, with the *Pſalmiſt*, that God is not in all their Thoughts; yet of well-diſpoſed Minds it may be ſaid, that he is not much at a time there: 'Tis long e're we can get ſight of him through the Optick Glaſs of Contemplation; and when we do, our Hands ſhake, or ſomething interpoſes, ſo that ever and anon we loſe ſight of him again; and this Levity of Mind, as it is ſeen in our Contemplations upon any Objects, ſo more eſpecially in the Performance of Holy Duties: We ſet forth in Prayer, it may be very well, with a due Compoſure of Mind, and an humble Senſe of our Obligations to God, and Dependance on Him; but perhaps e're we are got half way on with our Work, our Thoughts, which ſet out with our Lips, have given them the ſlip, and left them to go on by themſelves, whilſt they in the Interim have rambled perhaps from one Corner of the Earth to another, and made the *Grand Tour* of the World: When we ſhould earneſtly ſeek God by Prayer, and our Souls and Spirits ſhould aſcend ſtraight upwards in direct Rays of fervent Devotion, behold them toſſed

like a dried Leaf before the Wind, or as an empty Cask upon the Waves: For, *Inſtead of Good, Evil is preſent with us, and we cannot do the things that we would*; but the World and the Devil knock at the Door of our Hearts, ſtep in, and deſire to ſpeak with our Thoughts, divert them from their Buſineſs, and make a Man's Heart go after his Covetouſneſs, as the Prophet ſpeaks, after his Pleaſures, his Sins or his Secular Imployments: Any thing that was forgot before will be ſure then to preſent it ſelf to the Mind, and ſue for Audience. Nay, many times foreign Thoughts come about us, like Bees, as *David* ſpeaks of his Enemies, in whole Swarms together, and with their humming Noiſe diſtract our Attention; or, like *Abraham*'s Fowls, in Flocks, to peck at and deform our Sacrifice. And thus, again, it is in that other Branch of Religious Duty, Hearing of the Word; for no doubt but any Man, upon a juſt recollection of his Thoughts, will find they were out of Church ſeveral times whilſt his Perſon was there; at Home, in the Shop, or the Coffer, or indeed any where, but where

where they ſhould have been ; in fine, either out of Doors, or at play perhaps within, as much as the Children generally are without. But then take any other ſort of Objects, pleaſurable, or profitable, or honourable, and your Thoughts ſhall dwell, and hover, and brood over them, all the Day, ſaid I, nay, in the Night too, diſturb your Repoſe, and awake you ; for *the abundance of the rich*, to uſe the Wiſe Man's Inſtance, *will not ſuffer him to ſleep.* And ſo it is of any other worldly Project, gratifying Mens Luſts, compaſſing a Revenge, or the like: of the latter of which the ſame Wiſe Man ſpeaks ; *they ſleep not except they have done miſchief, and their ſleep is taken away unleſs they cauſe ſome to fall.* So intent are Mens Thoughts, ſo cloſely do they faſten upon theſe earthly, ſenſual, and many times Deviliſh Concernments, whilſt they are preſently weary, and frisk off from any thing that is ſacred, and ſober, and ſerious.

NOW this wandring in Prayer and other Holy Duties is reſolvable into ſeveral Cauſes. As

I. INTO

I. INTO our complex'd Conſtitution of Soul and Body. Whilſt our Souls are lodg'd in theſe pitiful Tenements of Clay, they cannot help being affected with the Inconveniences of their Habitation. They are confined to the uſe of Bodily Spirits in their moſt abſtracted Operations, and every conſiderable Diſorder in the Blood and Spirits does therefore of neceſſity produce a proportionable Diſorder in the Soul in thinking; and being ſurrounded with ſuch variety of Objects and Buſineſs, whilſt we live in this material World, which through the Intervention of our Senſes, leave their Ideas in the Head behind them, the Eye of the Mind can no more help looking upon them, when they are jogg'd and thrown in its way, than the Eyes of our Bodies can help ſeeing when they are open, or our Ears hearing the Sounds that ſtrike them. All this is natural and neceſſary, as the unavoidable Reſult of the dependance of the Soul in its moſt Spiritual Operations upon the Frame and Contexture of our Bodies during their Conjunction: And we may as well

well think of ceaſing to be what we are, and of caſting the Man in a new Mould, as of a total Prevention of this Infirmity of our Conſtitution. And this being ſo, we muſt expect to meet with it in our Prayers, as well as in other buſineſs of our Lives; 'tis in Heaven alone, where the Faculties of both Soul and Body ſhall be inlarged and refined, and we ſhall have but one Object of our Thoughts, God, who ſhall be all in all, that our Souls ſhall cleave inſeparably to him, without the leaſt Avocation. All which may ſerve to qualifie, by the by, the Scruples and Vexations incident to ſome tender Minds, who are apt perhaps to entertain too hard Thoughts of themſelves, becauſe they cannot ſo manage their Thoughts, that they ſhall regularly attend upon God's Service, without Breaks and Chaſms in them, without falling off now and then, and ſtraying from their preſent Buſineſs: For 'tis impoſſible, in the very nature of things, our Compoſition, totally to prevent the firſt beginnings, or Sallies of the Mind towards wandring; for the Spirits, by whoſe Intervention we perform

form theſe mental Operations, will not bear ſo rigid a Fixation; all we can do in the caſe, and that we muſt do, is to keep a ſtrict Eye upon our Thoughts, to drive away the Fowls that light upon our Sacrifice, to endeavour continually to check and controul and ſtop them in their Career to other Objects; and when at any time they have given us the ſlip, to call them upon the firſt Diſcovery home again to their buſineſs, and regret our Weakneſs; and if we thus both bewail, and labour to remedy thoſe Excurſions of our Thoughts, which we cannot totally hinder, they are not our Sin, but Infirmity, which will never affect our main ſtate.

II. DISTRACTING Thoughts in Prayer are very much owing to that natural Averſion we obſerv'd in us to things Spiritual and Divine; for ſuch Imployment of our Thoughts being therefore a ſort of *preternatural* Force upon them, the *Spring* that bends them Heaven-ward will be apt to relax, and give way to the contrary tendency of our Minds downwards; ſo that leaving thoſe unwelcom Objects, they preſent-

ly

ly fall back again into the Company of the old Familiars of their Thoughts.

III. OUR Diſtractions proceed, in a great meaſure, from an over-active and ungovern'd Imagination: 'Tis the Quick-ſilver part in our Mettal, that runs glibly up and down, and ſhoots, as it were, in our Minds, like Meteors in the Air, traverſing our Devotions with ten thouſand frivolous and fooliſh Conceits, preſenting us with thoſe fine Schemes and Images of things, Riches, Honour, or the like, till the diſtracted wandring Man, inſtead of his Maker, worſhips all the while perhaps the Idol of his own and the Devil's making. But we have diſcours'd the Extravagancies of this Faculty before.

IV. DISTRACTIONS in Prayer proceed frequently from an imtemperate Love of the World, and the Cares that attend its Enjoyments; which ſo often ingroſs our Hearts, that we no ſooner ſet about holy Duties, than they juſtle the one thing needful out of our Minds, and make *Mary*'s good part ſtand

Luke 10. 42. ſtand by, and give way to *Martha*'s Concern for the World and the Family. 'Tis certainly one of the moſt ridiculous, and yet moſt general Frailties incident to our corrupt Nature, to uſe this World, as if neither we, nor the Faſhion of it were to paſs away; which is juſt as if a Traveller, with buſineſs of infinite Importance on his Hand, ſhould loyter and take up with his Inn on the Road, without ever farther purſuing the end of his Journey. And poſſibly moſt of the Sins that are committed in the World, are fairly reſolvable into a too paſſionate Fondneſs for it. *Ye cannot ſerve God and Mammon*, is a Saying that carries a greater Force of Truth in it, than poſſibly moſt Men are aware of. For their Principles of Action are oppoſite, their Intereſts are oppoſite, and they require a quite different Frame of Mind in their reſpective Votaries: And we know who has told us no leſs truly than roundly, *That if any man love the world, the love of God is not in him*; for it ties down our Apprehenſions to things mean, and trivial, and baſe; and ſtifles and chokes our Deſires

of

of ſuch as are Spiritual and Divine; it extinguiſhes all holy fervour of Spirit, eſtranges from God, and puts out that Sacred Flame of Love for him, which is the very Life and Soul of our Devotions to him; it crowds into the Church and Cloſet with us, and like the Sons of *Zerviah*, is too hard for *David*; ſo that many times, with *Demas*, we *forſake the Lord* in our Thoughts, even whilſt we pretend to do him Homage, *having lov'd this preſent World*, whoſe *Thorns* (i.e. its Cares and Riches) *choak the Seeds*, in our Saviour's eſtimate, of all the Good that is ſown amongſt them; and therefore it is, that when God required the Male Children of the Jews thrice a Year to attend upon his Service at *Jeruſalem*, he promiſed that *no Man ſhould deſire their Land when they ſhould go up to appear before the Lord their God, thrice in the Year*; for the Fears and Jealouſies that might otherwiſe have ſeiz'd them, would have divided their Hearts betwixt God and their Families at Home, and ſo have blaſted the Fruits of ſo laborious and univerſal a Journey: And upon the ſame account it is, that the Apoſtle adviſes

Luke 8. 7, 14

Ex. 34. 24.

viſes ſingle Perſons, that were able to receive it, to continue rather in that ſtate, in times of Difficulty and Diſtreſs, that they might *attend upon the Lord without thoſe Diſtractions* of Mind, that are almoſt unavoidably incident to Perſons deeply intangled in Secular Concernments.

V. ANY reigning and prevailing Luſt will both obſtruct and diſtract our Devotions; for where our Treaſure is, there will our Hearts be alſo; and eſpecially, at the time of our Religious Services, will be apt to run out of the Cloſet and the Church to meet and chat with their beſt Beloved: We may indeed at ſuch Junctures be Proof againſt the Courtſhip of other inferiour Temptations, and therefore the Devil takes eſpecial Care then to ſet the Sin of our Boſom on work, to imploy the favourite Luſt for our Diverſion. And this is ſo uſual a Stratagem to decoy our Hearts from our Services, that we may hereby certainly diſcover our darling topping Luſt, the ὕψωμα of our depraved Hearts, that which all the others pay Obedience to, and do it Homage,

2 *Cor.* 10. 5.

Homage, for that to be ſure is it which pretends the greateſt intereſt in us, and thereupon diſturbs us moſt in holy Duties.

VI. OUR diſtractions in Prayer frequently proceed from thoſe Objects that ſtrike our Senſes during the Service. For 'tis not in the compaſs of our Powers to give any diſtinct and tolerable attendance to ſeveral and perhaps contrary Objects at the ſame time, ſo that the Ideas of thoſe we let in at ſuch junctures, at the doors of our Senſes, turn the Mind out of its way, and divert it from the proſecution of its proper Buſineſs. An open and erect ear to every ſound will make diſcord in the Brain, and vagrant Eyes will cauſe a wandring Heart: If *Dinah* like they gad abroad to ſee the Daughters of the Land, 'tis odds but they meet with Objects in their jant that will commit a Rape upon them. And therefore, we ſhould, either, with *Job*, *make a Covenant* with our Senſes, when we engage in holy Duties, let our *Eyes look right on*, as *Solomon* ſpeaks, and our *Eye lids look ſtraight before us*, or,

ſhut up their Doors as much as poſſible, to exclude the foreign diſturbers of our attention, for nothing poſſibly promotes fixation of Thought more than the cloſing of our eyes; experience tells us that Darkneſs is an undoubted help to intenſe Meditation, and the Arabian Proverb imports, that when the five Windows, thoſe of ſenſe, are ſhut up, the Houſe of the mind is then fulleſt of light: I might aſſign here ſeveral other negative Cauſes, as I may ſtile them, of this defect, as the want of a true love of God, want of a devout habit of Mind, want of preparation of the Heart, before we enter upon religious Duties, *&c.* But theſe will fall better under the laſt general Head of Diſcourſe, the regimen or government of our Thoughts upon theſe and other occaſions; and therefore,

VII. AND laſtly, There is no doubt to be made but that the diſtractions and wandrings of our Thoughts in Prayer, are, in a great meaſure, owing to the machinations and experiments of the Devil upon us; for tho' in theſe ordinary caſes we at preſent

ſpeak

ſpeak of, 'tis a difficult, and perhaps unneceſſary task to diſcover, whether the Devil or our own Thoughts are firſt in the Tranſgreſſion (for they are both ready enough to joyn in the confederacy againſt us) and doubtleſs Men are apt many times to charge the inbred Corruptions of their own depraved Nature to the account of that infernal Spirit, and ſo paint him blacker, if poſſible, than he is: And it were beſides an overnice and fruitleſs enquiry, to ſearch into thoſe Artifices and Methods whereby he may rationally be ſuppoſed to withdraw our attention from our Prayers; for we cannot well determine how far he may be concern'd in the uſe of any of thoſe means of diſtraction we have hitherto mentioned, as the love of the World, the wandring of the Senſes, the painted Scenes of the imagination, and the importunities of any reigning and prevailing Luſt. Nor can we with any certainty define what feats he is able to perform upon ſuch occaſions, by outward diſturbances and inward injections; for we can gueſs but darkly at the operations of Spirits, how far or

by what way they can insinuate and communicate their motions to our Minds; yet who so considers how instrumental he is in other Sins, as in *David*'s numbring the People: *Judas*'s betraying his Master: *Ananias*'s lying to the Holy Ghost, *&c.* more particularly, how much we are many times pester'd with foreign and improper Thoughts during our approaches to the Throne of Grace, whilst we find a great ease and freedom in our Minds when they are ingaged in worldly Business, or in any other philosophical or indifferent Contemplation: And who so reflects farther how much it is his interest to spoil and break off our Commerce with Heaven, and blast the Fruit of all our Prayers, since this visibly advances the interests of his Kingdom, must grant, in the general, that he is doubtless particularly concern'd in the wandring of our Thoughts during Divine Service. Accordingly we find that where St. *James* requires us to *draw nigh to God*, he bids us at the same time, *resist the Devil*, which is a plain evidence, that when we come to *stand before the* Lord, *Satan stands at* our

1 *Chro.* 21. 1. *Job.* 13. 27. *Acts* 5. 3.

Jam. 4. 7, 8.

our *right hand*, in the Prophet *Zachary*'s Language, *ready to reſiſt us*; And our Saviour himſelf in the Parable of the Sower and the Seed, tells us plainly, that *the Devil*, or, in St. *Matthews* Language, *the wicked One*, *taketh away the Word out of ſome Mens Hearts, leſt they ſhould believe and be Saved.* They are the hearers by the way ſide, our Lord there ſpeaks of, ſuch as in *Chriſoſtom*'s Expoſition advert not, nor attend to what is deliver'd, your careleſs ſupine Auditors, who, while the Preacher toils, *Chriſt* ſpeaks by him, and the Holy Ghoſt is ready to co-operate, are amuſing themſelves with ten thouſand incoherent and foreign imaginations: And what the Devil is ſo ready to do at Sermons, he will think it much more his intereſt to do at Prayers, and therefore, methinks, it ſhould be a powerful inducement to engage Men to a ſerious attention on both thoſe occaſions, to conſider that whilſt they are led aſide with thoſe vain imaginations, that interrupt their attending to what they themſelves ſay to God, or others ſpeak to them in his Name, the Devil all the while, if we'll believe

Zac. 3. 1.

Luk. 8. Matth. 13.

our Lord himſelf, is buſie with them, lays cloſe ſiege to their Hearts, and makes them more effectually ſerve him, than the Lord that bought them. Not that I look upon every ſuch aſſault and even ſucceſs of the Tempter upon us, as an argument of an irreligious Temper and reprobate Mind: For the Devil, who is all Spirit, can hold out the ſiege againſt us, longer than we, who dwell in houſes of Clay, can ſuſtain his Incurſions; the very Infirmity of our Compoſition, where tho' the Spirit may be willing yet the fleſh is weak, will neceſſarily make our Minds nod, take them off their guard now and then, and conſequently give the Tempter an unavoidable advantage over us, yet if theſe wandrings of our Spirits are grievous to our Minds upon recollection, if we hence learn what unprofitable Servants we are, even in our beſt Performances, and humble our ſelves hereupon in the ſight of God, begging him to *whip* thoſe *Thieves*, that ſteal away our Thoughts, *out of the Temples* of our Souls, we ſhall not ſtand chargeable with the Robberies they commit upon us, but as the Motions

tions of the good Spirit, when rejected, do ſo much the more inhaunce Mens Guilt, ſo will the injections of the evil One, when guarded againſt, as far as may be, and reſiſted, be ſanctified, through the divine Mercy, to our greater advantage. In fine, this wandring of the Mind in holy Duties, tho' in its beſt Conſtruction 'tis a great Unhappineſs, yet will be only ſo far imputed for Sin to us, as it is voluntary in its Cauſe, and in our own power to remedy, and is, in its Progreſs, whence ſoever it derives, indulged and complyed with.

Sect. 5.

WE proceed now to another more terrible ſort of Thoughts, wherewith the Minds of Men are many times unhappily infeſted. For it is not unuſual, for ſome tempers eſpecially, to be aſſaulted with abundance of odd, extravagant, and horrid Thoughts breaking in upon them, in ſpite of all Guard and Oppoſition. Thus you ſhall have ſome, thoſe particularly of muſing Heads and melancholly Diſpo-

ſitions, preſs'd upon now and then with Atheiſtical and Blaſphemous Co-
Pſ. 73. 2. gitations, tempted either, with *David*, to deny God, from a conſideration of the unequal Diſpenſation of his Providence in the World, or ſome other ſuch illogical Topick; or elſe, through the preſſure of their Afflictions, or the like, to think hardly of him, to deny him in his Attributes, to *charge* him *fooliſhly*, and *to Curſe him and die*. Others you ſhall have poſſeſs'd with diſmal Thoughts of their having ſinned the Sin againſt the holy Ghoſt, of their being Reprobates, caſt off of God, without the verge of his Mercy, and ſeal'd up for Deſtruction. Others, Laſtly, there are hurried on in their Minds to the commiſſion of ſome great and crying Sins, even againſt the bent of their own Propenſions, and that, ſometimes as far as ſelf Murder it ſelf, *&c.*

NOW theſe Thoughts being all of 'em a kin, and of the ſelf ſame Family, I ſhall not go about to treat of them ſeverally and apart, but together, and in the following Method,

I. I ſhall endeavour to ſhew that there is ſome difficulty in ſtating their proper Riſe and Origine. But that,

II. 'TIS of great uſe to know it, and therefore

III. IN order thereunto, I ſhall aſſign ſome Marks and Characteriſtics, whereby it may be known when they are of their Father the Devil.

IV. I ſhall ſhew, that howſoever troubleſom and afflicting they are, they do not affect nor endanger our main State.

V. And laſtly, I ſhall endeavour to preſcribe the regulation of them.

I. IT muſt be owned there is ſome difficulty in the enquiry into the Riſe and Origine of theſe horrid Thoughts, and 'tis hard to know many times whether they are the genuine Iſſue of our own corrupt Nature, or ſpurious Brats falſly father'd on us by the Devil. For he can inject as much

and

and more than our Corruptions can ſuggeſt, and yet poſſibly, on the other hand, they are able of themſelves, to carry us on to thoſe exceſſes that look *diabolical*, and when they joyn hand in hand, 'tis hard to know whether of the two firſt made the Motion, or proves the abler Solicitor of their common cauſe of Sin: *Out of the Heart*, ſays our Saviour, *proceed evil Thoughts, Murders, Adulteries*, &c. there they are *conceived*, whoſoever *begets* them. And
Rom. 1. 24. St. *Paul*, in his Epiſtle to the *Romans*, reſolves ſome of thoſe black Crimes, for which he brands the heathen World, into *the Luſts of their own Hearts*, and yet at the ſame time he has given us to underſtand, that *the*
Eph. 2. 2. *Prince of the power of the Air wrought in all ſuch Children of Diſobedience.* And indeed as the Doctrine of Divine and Humane Concurrence in the progreſs of true Piety is very plain, and legible, in the Scriptures, ſo as that we are ſaid, for inſtance, to *be waſhed and*
1 *Cor.* 6. 11. *ſanctified by the Spirit of God*, and yet are required *to cleanſe our ſelves from all*
2 *Cor.* 7. 1. *filthineſs of the Fleſh and Spirit*: So are the ſame Sins in different places charged

ed upon the Devil, and our own Hearts too. As, *David*'s numbring the People is aſcribed to Satan, and yet the King takes it to himſelf: Juſt as it is ſaid of *Ananias his lying to the holy Ghoſt*, that *Satan* put him on it, and yet that he *conceived it in his Heart.* 1 *Chron.* 21. 1. v. 8. *Acts* 5. 3, 4.

NOW tho' it be ſomewhat difficult, as we have ſeen, to know the true Parent of theſe hideous Thoughts we ſpeak of. Yet,

II. IT is of no ſmall uſe and concernment to meet with ſome ſatisfaction in the Matter; for the ſad Experience, I believe, of many, eſpecially Hypocondriack Perſons, tells us, (the darkneſs of whoſe Humour is beſt fitted to receive ſuch black Impreſſions,) how apt the grand Enemy of our peace is to throw theſe *fiery Darts* into our Hearts, and then to accuſe us of their burning within us, to commit a Rape upon our Spirits, and then lay the Child at our Doors, whereby he many times creates ſuch infinite Diſquiet of Thought, Horror of Conſcience, and Aſtoniſhment of all the Powers and Faculties

Faculties of tender Minds, that they are apt to look upon themſelves as rejected of God, deliver'd up to Satan, and in ſuch a deſperate and forlorn Condition, that the violent hand perhaps is ſometimes thought of to put a Period to the comfortleſs and wretched Life; and therefore, I ſay, it may be of excellent Uſe, on this Argument, for the Support and Encouragement of theſe unhappy Perſons, to point out ſuch Criterions and Characteriſtics,
2 *Cor.* 12. 7. whereby *the Buffetings of Satan*, as we render it, may be in ſome meaſure diſtinguiſhed from the genuine Productions of our own Minds, and thoſe generally aſſign'd by Divines are ſuch as follow.

I. THEY are the Devil's Thoughts, not ours, when the *Matter* of them ſurpaſſes the ſuggeſtions of our natural Corruption: For Nature her ſelf, unleſs turn'd perfectly Diabolical, ſhrinks, and gives back at thoſe outragiouſly wicked Motions, that paſs now and then in ſome Mens Minds, and there to be ſure they are the aſſaults of the Devil upon them, to Vex, Diſquiet,

Diſquiet, and Confuſe their Spirits, tho' he chance to prove unable to prevail with them. An evil Heart, 'tis true, may through its own inherent Wickedneſs, conjure up thoſe frightful Spectres of Thoughts, that would ſcare and amaze other Perſons, but that it ſhould be able, of it ſelf, to terrifie it ſelf, to fill the Mind with Horror, to ſtartle its own Corruptions, and go directly contrary to its own Affections, Inclinations, and Reluctancies, borders too much upon a contradiction to be admitted. No Man, for inſtance, of himſelf, can be ſtudious of Life, and yet at the ſame time entertain Thoughts of turning *felo de ſe*. The Suggeſtions of this kind that derive purely from our own Hearts, are always more or leſs agreeable to Nature, pleaſing to our Affections, and fall in with our own Inclinations.

II. THE injections of the Devil are diſcernable from the productions of our own Hearts, by the *Manner* of their aſſailing us. Corrupt Nature proceeds orderly and deliberately with us,

us, tampers and argues with our Thoughts, and through the deceitfulneſs of Sin, gradually gets ground upon us, till by ſteps and ſucceſſive advances it compleats its intended Victory. For our own Luſts do not force, but *draw us away*, wheedle us on, and entice us. But 'tis otherwiſe with Satanical Injections of this horrid Kind, they are a ſort of *motus in inſtanti*, dart and break in upon our Thoughts, howſoever otherwiſe imployed and taken up, without any previous intimation of their approaches, the Devil in theſe caſes ſends no harbingers before him to prepare his way, but forces his paſſage on a ſuddain, ſhoots like that Lightning, to which our Saviour compares his Fall, into our Minds, and Hell takes our Heaven by Violence.

Jam. 14.

Luc. 10. 18.

AND as Thoughts of this kind are thus ſuddain in their firſt attacques upon us, ſo are they obſerved generally to be very pertinacious and obſtinate in the continuance of them, which is a

III. IN-

III. INDICATION that they proceed from ὁ ἀντικείμενος, for 'tis highly agreeable to the innate malice of his temper, inceſſantly to alarm the Fort of our Souls with perplexities and anxieties of Mind about his injections, even then when he ſees he is unable to carry it. The

IV. AND laſt ſign of his being the Author of theſe Thoughts within us, is from the Effects that generally attend them. Our own Thoughts being the natural *Iſſue* of our own Hearts, do not ſcare nor affright us, nor are follow'd with any extraordinary perturbation of Mind and Spirit, and therefore when Men meet with ſuch Thoughts, as are accompanied with an Horror and Dread upon their Spirits, with confuſion of Mind, aſtoniſhment of its Powers, and perhaps with equal Agonies and Convulſions of Body, there to be ſure the Devil is the ſole Operator. Agreeable whereunto is that obſervation of Antiquity, that they were falſe Prophets, and of Diabolical inſpiration, who were acted in

a confuſed, perplexed, and diſtracted manner; the principal Teſt this whereby the Catholic Chriſtians were wont to diſtinguiſh an Enthuſiaſtic Montaniſt from a Divinely inſpired Prophet, as may be ſeen in *Euſebius*, where we find *Miltiades*, an Eccleſiaſtic Author, writing a whole tract upon this Subject, and *Aſterius Urbanus* challenging them all to produce him one ſingle inſtance of a Prophet, under either Old or New Teſtament, acted after their dark and impetuous manner. For the Devil dealt violently with his Enthuſiaſts, confuſed and oppreſs'd their Underſtandings, diſtorted and convuls'd their bodily Organs, and, in ſhort, put them, like the unhappy Perſons we at preſent ſpeak of, into moſt terrible Agonies of Soul and Body. *Pythia* her ſelf never mounted the Tripos but with Horror, where ſhe fomed, raved, and tore her Hair, like a Drunken or a Frantic Perſon, whilſt the Prophetick Fit laſted on her: And this I was the more willing, by the by, to take notice of, becauſe the darkneſs of Mind, and violent agitations of Body, obſervable amongſt a company of poor beſotted,

Euſeb. lib. 5. ch. 16, 17.

beſotted, if not ſometimes poſſeſſed Sectaries amongſt our ſelves, agree ſo exactly with the Deſcriptions Antiquity has left us of thoſe Children of Diſobedience the Devil wrought in then, that one may very well be tempted to conclude, he repeats the Experiment now and then upon theſe Men too.

COME we now in the Fourth place to conſider how far theſe horrid and amazing Thoughts affect our main ſtate, and touch our Salvation; an Argument ſo much the more neceſſary, by how much 'tis an undoubted Stratagem of the Devil to urge the Incurſion of ſuch Thoughts upon theſe unhappy Perſons, as cauſe of Deſpair and evident Argument of their Reprobation; and here it is to be obſerved.

1. THAT it is not altogether in our Power to govern our Thoughts, they are not abſolutely ſubject to our Dominion; for the Heart of Man is as it were an High Road, through which Paſſengers both good and bad will take their way, without asking leave of us; or, if you will take it under the Noti-

on of a Publick Houſe, which is open to all Comers, not only to the ſober, but to lewd and debauch'd Company, whoſe wild Roarings, Curſes, and Huzza's will ſtrike our Ears, and we cannot help it. For we can no more prevent our *ſimple Apprehenſions* of things, than a ſound and open Eye can prevent its ſeeing; and the one is no more polluted by a vitious Object than the other, and therefore to be ſure God will never condemn us for what we cannot help nor hinder. For

2. IT can never be Sin to us, becauſe unavoidable, to be ſubject to the Inroads of theſe black blaſphemous Thoughts upon our Minds, no more than 'tis Sin in us to be liable to the Aſſaults of any other *Temptation*. What worſe is a ſober Perſon for being tempted only to exceſs of Drinking, or a chaſte Virgin to Incontinence? Our Lord himſelf was *tempted* to commit the moſt groſs and abominable Idolatry, and yet notwithſtanding that, was as free from Sin in his Thoughts, as from Guile in his Mouth, becauſe he reſiſted the Temptation, and baffled the

the Tempter: We ſin only then when we baſely give way and comply with him. The Law of *Moſes* excuſed a Virgin that was forced in the Field (far from hearing;) *For as when a Man riſeth againſt his Neighbour and ſlayeth him, even ſo is this matter.* Deut. 22. 26. So when the Devil commits a Rape upon our Souls by Atheiſtical, Blaſphemous, or any other Horrid Injections, if we cry out for Help, abhor the baſe Suggeſtions in our Judgment, our Will, and Affections, great is our Victory, and greater ſhall be our Crown and Glory; Guilt is our Portion only then when we embrace the bold Raviſher of our Hearts, and kiſs and hug the Production of ſo monſtrous a Coalition. He were highly Criminal, who in a beſieg'd Town ſhould wilfully ſet his own Houſe on Fire; but a Man certainly is not reſponſible for the Fire-balls and Bombs that are thrown in by the Enemy; all he can, and conſequently is bound to do, is, to uſe his beſt Diligence to extinguiſh the Fire enkindled by them: And thus it is with theſe Thoughts we ſpeak of, if we make them out of the Ammunition of

our own Hearts, we are accountable for them; but if the Devil, who lays Siege to us, throw them in, we are no farther concern'd, than to take the beſt Care we can to put them out, to ſuppreſs and hinder their ſpreading: For, *that which is from within* only *defiles a Man*, not that which is thrown in from without; if we are purely paſſive in the matter, and joyn not with the Devil's Suggeſtions, ſo long they are his Thoughts, let him look to them, they are none of ours, we have nothing to do with them.

III. IT would be conſidered, that theſe frightful Thoughts derive many times more from an ill Habit of Body than of Mind, more from poor Blood and a bad Spleen, than from Indiſpoſition of Soul and falſneſs of Heart. *Melancholy*, whether natural, or acquired by Sickneſs, Loſſes, Afflictions, *&c.* (and ſuch Perſons are moſt infeſted with theſe horrid Thoughts) is of it ſelf apt to fill Mens Heads with infinite Crotchets, the blackeſt Conceits, and ſaddeſt Surmiſes, it creates the Images of Apparitions, Mormoes and Spectres,

Spectres, and then inclines the poor deluded Man to take them for Realities. Whilſt, alas! his Malady is generally better cured by good Air, wholſom Dyet, and Chalybeats, than by all the Recipes of Divinity: And then what reaſon has a Man to be troubled in Mind, or dejected in Spirit, more for this than any other Diſtemper? Why is poor Blood and a melancholy Diſpoſition a ſurer Mark of the Divine Diſpleaſure, than the Burnings of a Fever, or the Shiverings of an Ague?

IV. IT may be added, for the Support and Encouragement of theſe dejected Spirits, that their Malady is rarely incident but to Religious Diſpoſitions and pious Minds, that live under a tender Senſe of their Duty, and an awful Dread of the Divine Diſpleaſure. Were they in thoſe Bonds of Iniquity, and that ſtate of Reprobation they figure to themſelves, they would never be ſo happy as to experiment any of theſe Spiritual Conflicts in their Boſoms. *Non timeo hos pingues*, ſaid *Cæſar* of *Dolobella*, and his roaring Crew, but ſober *Brutus* and *Caſſius*

ſtuck in his Stomach; the Devil, like him, never troubles his Head with your ſupine unwary Sinners, who are amuſing their Heads with a thouſand wicked Projects that advance the Intereſts of his Kingdom; for he might chance to jog them out of their Sleep of Sin, and awaken them to Repentance, and ſo out-wit himſelf, ſhould he fright them by theſe terrible Injections: And therefore if *Ephraim is joined to Idols*, if Men are deeply ingaged in notorious Sins, he too ſays, like God, *let him alone*. For why ſhould the Prince of Darkneſs be thought ſo weak a Statesman, as to make War upon thoſe who have already ſubmitted to his Government, and ſworn Homage to him? But then he uſes all the Black Art of his Infernal Suggeſtions, to ſtop, and vex, or diſquiet the Religious Man in his holy Courſe. 'Twas righteous *Job* that he would fain have prevail'd with to *curſe God to his Face*; and 'twas the Holy Jeſus that was tempted by him to that horrid Blaſphemy, of renouncing the Worſhip of the great God, and ſubſtituting him in his ſtead. So that, upon the whole, Temptations of this

Hoſ. 4. 17.

Job 1. 11. & 2. 5.

this nature being rather an Argument of a pious than irreligious Temper, ought, in juſt conſtruction, to be ſo far from miniſtring Sorrow, that they may afford even matter of Comfort and Rejoycing to thoſe that are exerciſed therein.

V. AND Laſtly, Tho it muſt be confeſt, that theſe black Injections may be ſometimes, like other Judgments, the Chaſtiſement of our Sins, as of our Carnal Security for inſtance, of neglect of our Thoughts, grieving the Holy Spirit, *&c.* yet they are even then only the *evil of puniſhment*, as any other Infliction may be, not of Sin to us, unleſs we like, comply with, and approve them; and when they have once gained the Deſign, for which our Heavenly Father ſent them on his Children, as ſuppoſe the awakening them to a more through Repentance than they have yet arriv'd at, taking off their Inclinations to the Enjoyments of this preſent Life, teaching them a more perfect Recumbency upon God, abating their Pride, leſt they ſhould be, with St. *Paul*, *above meaſure exalted*, &c. 2 *Cor.* 12. 7.

then he takes off his afflicting Hand, reſtrains the Tempter, quiets the Mind, and ſpeaks Peace to his People.

CHAP. III. SECT. I.

THUS much of the Second Part of our Subject, the Defects, Failures, and Infirmities incident to our Thoughts. We are now arriv'd at the Third and Laſt, which is to preſcribe ſome Rules for the Government and Manage of them. And thus I will endeavour to do.

I. WITH Relation particularly to theſe horrid Thoughts we have juſt now treated of.

II. WITH Relation to the ſinful Infirmities of our Thoughts in Religious Duties.

III. AND Laſtly, I ſhall lay down ſuch Rules as concern the Government of our Thoughts in general.

Firſt,

First, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew, how we are to behave our ſelves with particular relation to theſe horrid Thoughts we have juſt now treated of. And,

1. THERE is no doubt to be made, but that Prayer, which is ſo proper a means to the attainment of every good and perfect Gift, and ſo powerful an Amulet againſt all the Evils we labour under, will be of ſpecial Uſe in the Caſe before us, *Is any among you afflicted, ſays St.* James, *let him pray*; and what greater Affliction, and conſequently, more preſſing occaſion to Prayer, than thoſe Perplexities of Mind we ſpeak of? For when can it be more opportune to call in the Aid of Heaven, than when we are thus immediately aſſaulted by Hell? What fitter to quench theſe *fiery Darts of the* Wicked than the *Shield of Faith* in God, *Eph* 6. 16. expreſs'd by our importunate Applications to him for Relief? For then muſt it be more eſpecially acceptable to God, to teſtifie an entire Dependance on, and Confidence in him, when he ſeems moſt

moſt of all to hide his Face from us in Diſpleaſure. For if we thus pour out our Supplications before him, hungring and thirſting after the Aſſiſtances of his Spirit, and the Teſtimony of our Conſciences, to ſupport us in theſe Spiritual Conflicts, he has promiſed, and therefore no doubt but in his own good time, he will ſhine upon us with the Light of his Countenance, and yield us Refreſhment: Will put his Hook into the Noſe, and his Bridle into the Lips of the Tempter, turn him back by the way by which he came, and give Eaſe to thoſe who have ſuffered ſo much in themſelves, for fear only of having offended him.

II. ANOTHER proper Remedy in this Caſe, is to avoid Idleneſs and ſolitary Retirements; it muſt indeed be own'd, in my Opinion, that Solitude is a mighty Help to Elevation of Mind, Applicatiou of Thought, Recollection of Spirit, and conſequently to true private Devotion; which might be the Reaſon, I preſume, why our Lord himſelf, on this occaſion, added ſometimes even the Darkneſs of the Night

Night to the Retirement of the Mountains. But yet, in this Caſe, when the Mind, left to it ſelf, is apt continually to dwell upon one's own ſuppoſed deſperate Condition, and be perpetually haunted with the Ghoſts it has conjur'd up, 'tis far more adviſable to repair to the City than to the Deſart, and to chooſe Company before a Retreat: The one will help to lay the Evil Spirit, the other as certainly improves its Terrors. If one fall in Society, another may lift him up again; but in Privacy, a Man muſt ſtand upon his own bottom, and be in ſome meaſure ſelf-ſufficient to encounter with the Tempter, and that in Circumſtances moſt advantagious to his Deſign upon us; for the Temptations of Solitude are, I verily believe, more dangerous than thoſe to be met with upon the Stage of Action, becauſe it lays us more eſpecially open to the Aſſaults of the Tempter; for which Reaſon 'tis rationally preſumed he made choice of the Wilderneſs, when he encountred with our Lord and Saviour; and both Reaſon, and the Experience of ſeveral, of *Ignatius* particularly, that famous Founder

der of the Jesuit's Order, and eminent Instance of the Truth, assures us, that they who give themselves much up to Solitude, are infinitely obnoxious to Satanical Illusions: If therefore we would divert and break the Force of these frightful Thoughts and Suggestions, we would do well to keep our Minds imployed, either in innocent and agreeable Conversation, or when out of that, in our own and proper Imployments; for Idleness is a sort of Solitude of the Mind, even in places of the greatest Concourse, and gives the Devil as great an Advantage against us, as the other Solitude of the Desart or the Cloister.

III. 'TIS advised by Divines in these Cases, rather to slight than to struggle and contest with the Tempter; not to argue the Case, or enter into Parley with him about one's Condition, (for the Conflict will gall and chafe our Minds the more) but, as far as we are able, to let his Hellish Injections go as they come, and be no more concerned for his blaspheming within us, than for the Curses and Imprecations

precations of any other lewd Company that we cannot get rid of. For Oppoſition does but perpetuate the Fray, and make the Battel the hotter: A wild Beaſt, if you violently ſtop its Paſſage, may chance to run over you; let it alone, 'twill go the gentler by you: The way then in this caſe is, not to *reſiſt the Devil*, otherwiſe than by Prayer, but to let him ſpend his Fury, and bear his Shocks with a ſevere Contempt of them, with a reſolv'd Firmneſs of Mind, and Sedateneſs of Temper, till his Force diſſipates and waſtes away of it ſelf.

IV. AND Laſtly, A conſtant Proſecution of one's Duty, howſoever irkſom and uncomfortable it may appear, will certainly in time give the Mind Eaſe, and ſet it at Liberty from theſe Helliſh Thoughts: The Clouds that darken the Mind now, will by Perſeverance in Duty be ſucceeded by a perfect Day, a Day of Glory and Eternal Brightneſs. For God will judge no Man for what he cannot help nor hinder, but will certainly reward him who does him the beſt Service he is able,

able, and is grieved only he can do him no better. For 'tis true in this case too, that if there be *a willing Mind, it is accepted according to what a Man has, and not according to what he has not.*

Sect. 2.

PROCEED we now to such Considerations as may be proper to govern and fix our Thoughts, during our Attendance upon Religious Duties.

AND here we cannot more profitably commence this important Work, than by the same measure we at first prescribed on the last part of this Subject; that is, by addressing to God for his Aid and Assistance in the matter, that not only the *Words of our Mouth, but the Meditations of our Heart* (especially in our immediate Approaches to Him) may be *always acceptable in the sight of the Lord our God, and our Redeemer.* For Prayer it self will facilitate that Application of Mind which is necessary to a due Performance of it, in as much as it purifies the Heart, sublimates

limates the Spirit, and exalts it above its natural Pitch and Level: For by often returning to God, and carefully renewing our Commerce with Heaven, we ſhake off our Criminal Diſpoſitions; and what was at firſt irkſom and weariſomneſs to the Fleſh, becomes at length an eaſie and a pleaſurable Exerciſe. He will never be able to arrive to any tolerable degree of Perfection in any Attainment, whoſe Deſires do not firſt carry him on towards it with ſome Eagerneſs and Impatience; and Prayer is nothing but putting our Deſires into Suit. He is certainly a very temerarious Perſon, who commences any Undertaking, without invoking firſt the Divine Favour and Aſſiſtance: The only proper Foundation-Stone whereon to build our Hopes of Succeſs in any of our Enterpriſes, and judged as ſuch even by the Heathen World it ſelf, who generally commenc'd their Works with Apprecation of good Succeſs from the great Author of it. *Caſar*, being to enter the Senate, ſacrificed firſt, and Prayer among them was a conſtant Attendance upon that Performance; and *Appian* particularly

ſpeaks

ſpeaks of that Act, not as of an extraordinary, but as of a cuſtomary thing. And if this piece of Homage be ſo highly our Duty in enterpriſing things that do not, I may ſay, ſo nearly regard him, how much more will it be ſo in our Endeavours to attain that Grace which flows directly from him, immediately concerns his Honour, and is terminated in him, as its final and onely proper Object?

II. ANOTHER proper Remedy for the Government of our Thoughts in Religious Duties, is to qualifie and prepare our Hearts before-hand for the Performance: To diſcharge all Thoughts of the World for that time from their Attendance, to require them to ſtand by, to *tarry here or there, whilſt we go and Pray yonder.* 'Tis true indeed, that the *Loins of a Mind*, throughly principled with the Love and Fear of the Divine Majeſty, are always *ready girt about* for the Sacrifice, ſuch Perſons living under a conſtant Senſe and Practice of it; but we addreſs not here to the *whole*, who have no need of a Spiritual Phyſician, but to thoſe who are

ſick

ſick of their Duty; who come to it with ten thouſand foreign and improper Ideas; with the Images of an Eſtate, a Purchaſe, a Family, a Trade, a Ball, a Conſort of Muſick, or perhaps laſt Nights Debauch about them: To theſe one would preſcribe ſome preparatory Phyſick, ſome ſequeſtring of the Mind from theſe ingaging Objects, before they enter upon converſing with God, and correſponding with Heaven, leſt the Thoughts that poſſeſs'd them this Hour or this Day, keep their haunt the next, and marr the Performance. We are not wont to ruſh into the Preſence of a Prince without premeditation, and ſome previous Care of our Mien and Deportment, and how comes it then to paſs, that we dare preſume to addreſs the Living God ſo familiarly and ſo rudely? *Before thou Prayeſt*, ſays the wiſe Son of *Syrach*, *prepare thy ſelf, and be not as one that tempteth the Lord*, *i. e.* I conceive, to be angry with thee, and to curſe rather than to bleſs thee. 'Twas one of the *good things* found in *Jehoſaphat*, *that he had prepared his Heart to ſeek God:* And no Man pretends to good Muſick, before he has

Eccleſiaſticus 18. 23.

2 *Chron.* 19 3.

put his Inſtrument in tune; when *our Hearts are fixed*, O God, when *our Hearts are fixed*, then ſhall we beſt *ſing and give Praiſe*. Now by Preparation here I do not mean thoſe ſuccinct Applications we are wont to make to God upon our entering on his Service in Houſes ſet apart to that purpoſe, but the revolving in our Minds ſuch previous Reflections as theſe.

1. THE Weight and Importance of the Duty we are about, which is the only proper Conveyancer of the Divine Bleſſings, and that by Divine Appointment; and is of no leſs conſequence to us, than the Supply of our Wants both Spiritual and Temporal, the promiſes of this Life, and of that which is to come; 'tis, in a word, a Tranſaction whereon depends the Concern of Life and Death, and what is more, of Eternal Life, and Eternal Death; and will a Man ſlubber over ſuch a buſineſs as this, will he plead his Cauſe ſo ſupinely, as if he were bribed againſt himſelf, when ſo vaſt an Eſtate as the everlaſting Inheritance depends upon the Iſſue of the Tryal? *Moſes* exhorts

exhorts the *Jews* to hearken unto the Words of the Law, becauſe, ſays he, *it is your Life.* Prayers and Praiſes are the *Spiritual Life* of a Chriſtian, and therefore when any forreign Thoughts aſſail it, either by force or fraud, we muſt take up *Nehemiah*'s anſwer to his Enemies, *I am doing a great Work, ſo that I cannot come down, why ſhould the work ceaſe whilſt I leave it and come down to you.* A

Deut. 32. 40.

Nehem. 6. 3.

2. PREPARATORY will be beſt placed upon the dread Majeſty of him we addreſs to, and his more immediate Preſence in places ſet apart for his Service; for God himſelf alledgeth the greatneſs of his Majeſty, to caution Men againſt offering him any mean and contemptible Sacrifices: *Curſed be the Deceiver*, ſays he, *which hath in his flock a Male, and Voweth and Sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: For I am a Great King, ſays the Lord of Hoſts, and my Name is dreadful among the Heathen*; and the wiſe Man urgeth the diſtance betwixt the great Creator and his Creatures, as an Argument of that Sobriety and exactneſs of Utter-

Malac. 1. 14.

ance and Affection that becomes his Preſence: *Be not raſh with thy Mouth*, ſays he, *and let not thine Heart be haſty to utter any thing before God: For God is in Heaven, and thou upon Earth.*

AY, 'tis certainly the want of a due Conſideration of the terrible Name of the Great and Living God, who is infinitely exalted above our moſt elevated Conceptions of him, that makes us ſo often preſent him with the Sacrifice of Fools, that *Excors Sacrificium*, which the Heathen World look'd upon as ſo prodigious a thing. It requires indeed a genius, wide, and Philoſophical, the portion of but a few, to take in a full draught of Contemplation of the Great and Invſible Being; and tho' it muſt be own'd, that the moſt refined Capacity cannot now behold him as he is, ſhining in his full Orb of Glory (for the Contemplation of his Eſſence is an Abyſs, which immediately devours and ſwallows up a dark and broken Underſtanding, it being a ſort of endeavour to look God in the Face, which no Man can do and Live) yet he has not left us without witneſſes

witneſſes of his Majeſty, in the convulſion of the Mountain, and the agony of Nature at the promulgation of the Law, in the lofty, but yet infinitely inadequate Deſcriptions that the Prophets give of him: In his works, of *ſpreading out the Heavens, and treading upon the Waves of the Sea*, &c. In thoſe frightful and amazing Accounts the Scriptures give us, of the tranſactions of the laſt Day, *&c.* And certainly did we but endeavour to poſſeſs our Souls with tolerable Conceptions, of this great and dreadful Being, from theſe imperfect Notices we have of him; we could not but be induced to take ſome tolerable care, how and what we ſay, when we are ſpeaking unto God, for the Angels themſelves, the ten thouſand times ten thouſand that ſtand before him, do not more truly miniſter in his Preſence, than we do in our addreſſes to Him. And Oh! that we had but a glimps of him that is Inviſible, that the God of Heaven would but irradiate our dark Capacity, with ſome beam of his Majeſty, with what Reverence, what Fear and Trembling, ſhould we come before

him? And this more eſpecially, in places conſecrate and ſet apart for the payment of our Homage to him, where he vouchſafes his more immediate and more ſpecial Preſence. Not indeed after any groſs and local manner, as the Gentiles conceiv'd of their fictitious Deities in their Temples, in which ſenſe it is ſaid of the *moſt High*, that
Acts 7. *he dwelleth not in Temples made with hands*; but by the retinue of his Angels, which give their more immediate Attendance there, as in their Maſter's Houſe, by his Word and Sacraments, and by his peculiar readineſs to hear, and bleſs thoſe that devoutly
Exod. 20. 24. call upon his Name there; for which reaſon, as one well obſerves, the Tabernacle of the Lord was call'd אוהל מועד *the Tabernacle of meeting*; not of Mens meeting together, as is commonly ſuppos'd, when we tranſlate it, *Tabernacle of the Congregation*; but
Numb. 17. 4. of God's meeting there with Men, his poor humble Supplicants: For ſo he himſelf gives the reaſon of the Name: *And thou ſhalt lay them up*, ſays God to *Moſes*, ſpeaking of the Rods of the
Exod. 25. 22. Tribes, *in the Tabernacle of the Congregation*,

gation, before the Teſtimony; where I will meet with you. And there I will meet with thee, and commune with thee. And what elſe can be the true and unſtrained meaning of that Paſſage of our Saviour's in the Goſpel, where he promiſes, that where *two or three are gathered together in his Name, he is there in the midſt of them*? For, whatever may be particularly affirmed of the Temple, a greater than *Solomon* is here, even God wonderful in his holy Places; ſure theſe are no other than the Houſes of God, theſe are the Gates of Heaven. *Pſal.* 85. 35.

AND therefore we would do well to take care how we make *Iniquity, even the Solemn Meeting*; by affronting God with our Lip-Services, and that ſo *immediately to his Face*: For can any Man in his wits but think, that the great God, to whom the profoundeſt Homage of the Soul is due, is much more affronted than he is honoured, by the dull ſpiritleſs muttering a few *Pater noſters*, or any other Prayers, by the bare telling over, as the manner of ſome is, and ſtringing up their Petitions?

tions? We durſt not thus mock our Prince to his Face, we would hardly do it to our Equals; and whence then is it, but through want of preparing our Hearts with due Conceptions of his Awful and Majeſtick Preſence in his own Houſe, that we make thus bold with our Maker?

3. IT might be a proper preparatory reflection, to conſider the Fruits and Conſequences of approaching God in ſo careleſs and ſo incogitant a Manner. I ſhall not go about to ſhew at large, how ſevere God has formerly been upon all Diſorders and Irregularities committed about holy Things and Duties; as in the Caſe of *Aarons* Sons; of *Uzzah*; of the *Bethſhemites*; and of the Church of *Corinth*; nor how he threatn'd that for this very thing, becauſe his People *drew near to him with their Lips, but had removed their Heart far from him, he would therefore proceed to do a marvellous Work among them, even a marvellous Work and a Wonder*: Which was no leſs than to *confound the Wiſdom of the Wiſe, and the Underſtanding of the prudent Men* amongſt

Lev. 10. 2.
2 *Sam.* 6. 6.
1 *Sam.* 6. 19.
1 *Cor.* 11. 30.
Iſa. 29. 13, 14.

amongſt them: I ſhall not, I ſay, inſiſt on theſe Conſiderations now, becauſe it has ſeem'd good to the infinite Wiſdom, to alter the nature of his Inflictions, and for neglects of this kind eſpecially to change them from temporal into ſpiritual; which, tho' they do not ſo immediately affect the Body as the others did, yet endanger the Soul, and take away the ſpiritual Life of a Chriſtian. For tho', he do's not now ſmite Men with Death, for their unſanctified Approaches to him, yet he ſmites them with *Deadneſs*, with Coldneſs and Indifferency in the cauſe of Religion, ſuffers them to grow liſtleſs, reaſty, and awkard at their Devotions, and ten to one to lapſe at long run into open Atheiſm and Prophaneneſs. For we certainly loſe ground by every ſpiritleſs Prayer we advance, grow from bad to worſe, from worſe to ſtark nought, and *paſt feeling*. For every ſuch formal performance grieves the Spirit, cloggs the Conſcience, hardens the Heart, and gives the Devil an occaſion to draw us off from our Neutrality, and to make us at laſt declare for his Party; whence it is not improbable,

improbable, that, when we have once contracted ſuch a vitious habit and craſis of Soul in Devotion, he himſelf many times ſends us to our Prayers, that he may add to our Diſeaſe, and turn the beſt Antidote we have againſt him into ſo much ſtronger Poiſon to our ſelves. And therefore we would do well to ſeaſon and prepare our Hearts beforehand, with theſe, and the like Conſiderations, that by a juſt Reflection upon the Importance of the Duty, the Supream Majeſty to whom we pay it, and the fatal Conſequences of a perfunctory Performance of it, we may *attend upon the Lord without Diſtraction.*

III. ANOTHER proper means, to fix our Thoughts in the Service of God, is to *Love* him with all our Hearts, with all the Powers and Capacities of our Souls; did we *Delight* to have our Converſation with Him, our Hearts would keep our Minds cloſe to their Work, and not ſuffer them to loiter or to ramble; for our Affections have an immediate Influence upon our Thoughts, and our Hearts generally

generally ſet our Mind the Theme of its Contemplations; Love particularly is a commanding and imperial Paſſion, that bids us go, and we go; come, and we come; do this, and we do it; a paſſion that ingroſſes all our Powers, binds us faſt to, and runs our Thoughts ſo deep into its Object, that we have neither Leiſure, nor Patience, hardly Power, to attend to any others. *O how I love thy Law*! ſays holy *David*, and then it follows, both in him, and in the nature of the thing, *it is my Meditation all the Day*; and the firſt part of his Character of a good Man is, that *his Delight is in the Law of the Lord*; and the ſecond is the natural Reſult of the firſt, that *in his Law doth he meditate Day and Night*. For a Man cannot but pore and muſe on the thing he delights in; and therefore were our Hearts raviſhed with the Love of God, from juſt and retired Reflections upon the benefits of Creation, Preſervation, Redemption, and the Glory that hereafter ſhall be Revealed, did we but kindle this holy Flame in us by frequent Conſiderations of his patience, forgiveneſs, forbearance, the Abyſs of his

Pſ. 119. 97.

Pſ. 1. 2.

his Love, and the great depths of his infinite beneficence: Things that muſt needs render the Deity amiable and lovely to us in our Conceptions of him: All our Motions would tend Heavenwards, when once invigorated with impreſſions from that celeſtial Fire, we ſhould not be at leiſure to admit any Rival of God in our Thoughts, and to attend to thoſe little idle Toys and Fancies, that have the impudence to ſtep into our Cloſets, and diſtract us.

IV. MEDITATION is another proper Remedy of the wandring of our Thoughts in Prayer. The Hill of Meditation is indeed of difficult, but yet of noble Aſcent, that lifts us up ſo far above our natural Level, that we look down upon the World, and all its Enjoyments, which ſo frequently interrupt our Devotions, as a very little Thing. 'Tis an heroic and abſtracted Operation of the Soul, that lets us into the very ſecrets of the Objects we Contemplate; that makes every day freſh Diſcoveries, and gives us both deep and diffuſed Proſpects of things

things otherwiſe inviſible: The Teleſcope of the Mind, whereby we deſcry new Worlds, *a new Heaven, and a new Earth*, the *Terra incognita* of Nature and Grace; and ſee things at an immenſe diſtance from us: It opens to us the Scene of Paradiſe it ſelf, makes a ſort of indiſtance betwixt God and our own Souls, takes us out, or, at leaſt, makes us forget that we are Fleſh, fills our head with thoſe elevated Conceptions, and warms our Heart with thoſe Raviſhments of Joy, that we can feel indeed, but cannot utter or expreſs them. And he who has never yet been experimentally ſenſible of this Truth, never yet rightly enjoyed either God, or himſelf, has the moſt exquiſite Pleaſure of this Life yet to come, and wants the preparatory Foretaſte of the Enjoyments of the other. Meditation, in a word, I mean where God is the Object, both quickens and fixes our Devotion, which embraces not its Object but in proportion as Meditation gives it Entrance.

V. AND Laſtly Solitude gives a mighty fixation of Thought, in private, and Religious Aſſemblies in publick Devotion; for a Retreat naturally tends to Recollection of the Spirit and Communion with God, it helps to center all the Emanations of our Souls upon him, and gives us more pure and perfect Proſpects; and therefore, *when thou prayeſt*, ſays he, who taught us to pray, *enter into thy Cloſet*, not only to avoid that vain Pomp and Parade, which the Phariſaic Votaries ſo much affected, but no doubt to better the Performance, by with-drawing, as much as may be, from thoſe Impreſſions of worldly Objects, that are wont ſo fatally to perſecute and diſtract us. Any thing that requires application of Mind carries the neceſſity of Retirement along with it: How much more that Performance, to the full diſcharge whereof the utmoſt Stretch of our Humane Capacities is inadequate: All which is by no means to be underſtood in prejudice to the Publick Prayers of Religious Aſſemblies; where the regular Gravity and

and Decorum of the Worſhip, the united Zeal and Devotion of the Worſhippers, the Sacredneſs of the Word that is read, the Importance of the Duty, the Dreadfulneſs of the Place, *&c.* all conſpire to wing the Devout Soul with divine Elevations, to fix it upon God, and give it a Solitude in the great *Congregation.*

AND thus much for thoſe Remedies that may be proper to cure the Diſtraction and Flatneſs of our Thoughts in Gods Service.

SECT. 3.

WE are now arrived at the laſt diviſion of our Subject, which is to direct to ſuch Means, as may be proper for the government of our Thoughts in general, *i. e.* on whatſoever Subject they are exerciſed.

AND here not to inſiſt upon that *Catholicon* of Prayer we have already mentioned, that which being a Soveraign and Univerſal Remedy againſt all the Evils we labour under, muſt conſequently

conſequently be of excellent Uſe againſt the Exorbitancies of our Thoughts; I would adviſe, in the

I. PLACE, to open the Scene of the Day with good and ſavoury Thoughts in the Morning: To make the ſtrength and firſt born of our Conceptions every day holy to the Lord; *when I awake*, ſays holy *David*, *I am preſent with thee*; God ever took place in his Thoughts, and was the earlieſt Theme of his Meditations. For, *in the Morning*, ſays he, in another place, *I will direct my Prayer unto thee, and will look up*; we muſt, like him, if we would, with him, learn to hate vain Thoughts, conſecrate our moſt ſprightly and ſparkling Meditations to him, who *giveth his beloved ſleep*, and yet himſelf *neither ſlumbers nor ſleeps*. For there is no doubt to be made, but that a Mind well ſeaſoned and tinctured with good Thoughts in the Morning, will, with ordinary care, retain its Smack and Fragrancy all the day; but if we let the World or the Devil in firſt, 'tis great odds but they keep poſſeſſion all the day, come home too,

too, and go to bed with us in the Evening.

II. SINCE ſo much of the vanity of our Thoughts is owing to the Imagination, as we have ſeen before at large, it will be highly proper to reſtrain that extravagant Power within its due bounds, to confine it home, and not ſuffer it to run out, ramble, and gad ſo far abroad amongſt variety of Objects, that we cannot at our pleaſure call it back again; to take care however that it make not falſe Reports of things, and impoſe upon our Reaſon with fictitious and Romantic exaggerations of them, to draw out our Thoughts in the dance after it, but that we learn judiciouſly to diſtinguiſh betwixt the intrinſic value of things, and the extravagant Repreſentations of a lying Imagination.

III. SINCE our Minds receive the Ideas and Images of moſt things originally from our Senſes; ſince it is by theſe avenues that outward Objects make their way to our Hearts, our Ears being, as it were, the gates by

which the Objects from without deſire to ſpeak with our Thoughts, and our Eyes as windows to our Minds, through which they gaze upon them: It concerns us to ſet *Waiters* at theſe *Cinque Ports* of our Senſes, to *ſeize* upon all contraband Goods, and ſearch all Comers, as the Governour of a Fortreſs will take care to guard its Avenues, and examine Paſſengers, eſpecially ſtrange Faces, leſt it be inſenſibly betrayed, or ſurpriſed into the hands of an Enemy, under the appearance and vizor of a Friend: Not that the Senſes are of themſelves any way criminal, for they diſcharge but their reſpective Offices, according to the Laws of their Creation: Nor that all, or moſt of the Images of things, they let in, are noxious and ſinful, (for what harm had the wedge of Gold or Babyloniſh Garment in them, when *Achan* look'd upon them, coveted, and took them; and is not the fair Face drawn, and melodious Voice turn'd by the finger of God, who can do no Evil?) But they become an occaſion of Sin by the doteing of the Heart upon them; and therefore it is we muſt guard

guard our Senſes, to deprive that of the matter of its Crimes, and let its fooliſh Fire go out for want of fuel fit to keep it in. And yet how contrary to this is the practice of the World, where our Eyes are every day expos'd to the infection of wanton Pictures, light Dreſſes, natural and artificial Beauties, to the redneſs of the Wine when it gives its colour in the Glaſs, and to a thouſand criminal Examples, and our Ears ſtand all the day open to amorous Romantic Stories, obſcene Jeſts, back-bitings, and Revilings, and moſt times to flat and inſipid Diſcourſes, that neither miniſter Morality, nor Grace, nor Reaſon to the Hearers, ſo that our Souls return home at night infected with the vain Air of the courſes of the day, and full charged with toys and ten thouſand Amuſements, which leave ſuch ſenſible Impreſſions behind them, that we are ſtill hankering after thoſe Objects, that gave us ſo agreeable a Diverſion, our Minds become unwilling Inhabitants of their tenements of Clay, and little better perhaps than Captives taken by Satan at his Will. The *Tree was pleaſant to*

the Eye, and then the poor Woman inveigled by her Senſe, could not forbear to take and eat of the Fruit: So that we had need go and learn what that means, *touch not*, *taſte not*, *handle not*; had need not gaze on a Maid, in the advice of the wiſe Son of *Syrach*, *leſt we fall by thoſe things that are precious in her*, and our *Eyes* be *full of Adultery*; had need, in this Senſe too, *take heed how we hear*, and *turn* (in *Solomon*'s advice) *from the preſence of a fooliſh Man, when we perceive not in him the lips of Knowledge*, or wiſe and profitable Diſcourſe. Had the Royal *David*, with *Job*, *made a Covenant with his Eyes*, both he and *Bathſheba* had preſerv'd their Innocence, and *Uriah* his Life; but, Alas! the King kept no Life-guard there (as I may properly call it) where it ſeems it was moſt needful, and ſo the *Man after God's Heart*, ſuffered his own to walk, in *Job*'s Expreſſion, *after his Eyes, his ſteps turn'd out of the Way, and he was deceiv'd by a Woman.* And therefore if we would take one primary Step towards the government and good diſcipline of our Thoughts, we muſt, as far as we are able, amidſt that

Prov. 14. 7.

that variety of Objects that perpetually ſurround us, turn away our Eyes from beholding Vanity, and our Ears from hearkening unto Folly, muſt ſhut the gates againſt the Enemies of our Peace, and not enter into parley with them, leſt they beck and ſmile upon our Thoughts, give them good Words, call them out, and they, and our affections, that are conſequent upon them, tempt us to yield and ſurrender our Innocence.

IV. THEREFORE, in conſequence of this, it will be neceſſary to make a right choice of the company we keep; which has many times, ſo unreaſonable an Awe over the modeſty of Humane Nature in its propenſions towards Good, that like St. *Paul*'s Perſon, in the 7*th*. to the *Romans*, by reaſon of it, *the good that we would, we do not*. For 'tis a hardy well reſolv'd Piety, that ventures to exert in bad Converſation, *but the Evil which we would not, that we do*: For the byas of our own propenſions naturally inclines us to follow criminal before good Examples. And therefore if we would

effectually preſerve our Innocence, we muſt not only let no prophane or lewd Converſation proceed out of our own Mouths, but muſt be deaf to all that's vented by others. For, believe me, there's a ſtrange malignity in bad converſe, to poyſon and infect even the beſt Diſpoſitions: A ſort of *Effluvia*, as a learned Perſon of our own ſpeaks, from the Spirits of Men as well as from their Bodies; *with the Clean thou ſhalt be Clean, and with thē Froward thou ſhalt learn Frowardneſs*, for Lewdneſs has but a ſhort and eaſie Paſſage from the Ear to the Heart. And therefore what King *Solomon* adviſes in relation to the angry and furious Man, that we *make no friendſhip with him, leſt we learn his ways, and get a ſnare to our Soul*, is equally applicable to any other inſtance of bad Acquaintance; for *he that touches Pitch ſhall be defiled therewith*, ſays the Son of *Syrach*; and *can a Man*, ſays the wiſe King, *take fire in his Boſom, and his Cloaths not be burnt, can he go upon hot Coals, and his feet not be burnt*? Will evil Communication let your Manners go as good as it found them? Or, is it not rather verified by

Prov. 22. 23, 24.

the

the experience of every ordinary obſerver of himſelf, that when we meet with an agreeable, howſoever dangerous or deſtructive Converſation, we carry it home along with us, ſuck it in, and our Thoughts chew the cud ſo long upon it, many times in our moſt private Retirements, that we aſſimilate the vicious nutriment into a part, as it were, of our very Compoſition. And therefore the beſt way to ſecure our Thoughts from Infection, is, to practiſe with the Adder, to ſhut our Ears againſt the voice of ſuch Charmers, charm they never ſo agreeably to our own corrupt Inclinations. *To accept no Perſon againſt our own Soul, and not let the Reverence of any Man cauſe us to fall,* but to exchange the Communion of Devils for that of Saints; whoſe Examples and ſalutarie Diſcourſes may ſeaſon our Minds, and, as Iron ſharpens Iron, rub off the ruſt we have contracted, and give an edge to our Spirits. Eccl. 4. 22.

V. AND as Men ſhould be thus choice in their company, in order to the preſervation of their Thoughts, ſo

likewiſe the ſame care would be had of thoſe Books, upon which they now and then imploy their vacant hours. It will not be a vanity to affirm that no Nation in the World exceeds our own for variety of good Books, Publiſh'd in our own Language, and adapted to all Capacities; and yet, ſo far of late Years have we ſuckt in the *French* Air, that, as ſome have laboured the Introduction of their Government amongſt us, tho' the moſt uneaſie and tyrannical in Chriſtendom, ſo others have as greedily imitated them in their Vices, and made their Vanities claſſical and authentick: I mean particularly their Plays, Operas, Farces, Romances, and other ſuch like curious Cobweb Work of idle Brains; in ſo much that a Man may ſay on this Occaſion, with King *Solomon*; *the Heart of him that hath Underſtanding ſeeketh Knowledge, but the Mouth of Fools feeds on Fooliſhneſs.* Such Fools amuſe and pleaſe themſelves with the remembrance of idle and fictitious Stories, with the amours of one Romantic Hero, and the brave imaginary Exploits of another: And thus the Head

is

is fill'd with Froth inſtead of Brains, and the Thoughts, *Camelion*-like, live on the Air, on *that indeed which is not*, as having no other Being but what a fruitful Invention, and a roving Fancy gives it. I ſay then, that for the better ordering Mens Thoughts; it will be requiſite that they lay out their vacant Hours to better purpoſe, particularly on thoſe infallible Records of eternal Wiſdom that are able to *make them wiſe unto Salvation*, and endeavour to fraight their heads with Piety, and Senſe, inſtead of Fumes and Feathers. For what Men read, if it fall in with their own fooliſh and corrupt Inclinations, leaves laſting Impreſſions behind it, and, generally, the worſt thing that paſſes in Converſation, either with the Living or the Dead, ſticks the longeſt by us, and affords moſt food for the Thoughts to feed upon, and 'tis well, after all, if ſuch Perſons proceed yet no farther, and turn not the well told legendarie Tales that they Read, into true and real Hiſtory by their Practice.

VI. THEN

VI. THEN ſince the vanity of Thoughts is ſo much owing to the ill Supplies they meet with, partly from idle Books, partly from as idle Converſation, it will be further requiſite to furniſh the Mind with good Materials, for it to exert and deſcant on. Since the crudities of the Soul, like thoſe of the Stomach, proceed ſo much from thoſe ill Juices which have vitiated its tone and digeſtion; we muſt provide it better food and more wholeſom diet, to recover its taſte, its due craſis, and conſtitution; for the Soul as well as the Body is apt to participate of the Nature of that which affords it its uſual Nouriſhment. And, here we have as large a Table ſpread for our mental Repaſt, as the wonders contain'd in God, in Nature, and in Grace can furniſh. View the firſt of theſe in his Almighty Power, whereby, as he ſpake the World out of Nothing, ſo he can, not only think, but return it into Nothing again: In his Immenſity, whereby he fills all Places, and is contained of None: In the Unity and Simplicity of his Nature, a whole

whole without parts: In his Underſtanding to which the Truth of all things before they had a Being, was as broad noon day to him, or rather he to them, their Eſſences being all diſplayed in, and derived from his own: In his Will, the immediate Efflux or firſt born of his Underſtanding, and yet co-evous with its Parent: View him in the Juſtice of his Judgments, in the Wiſdom of his Providence, and in his Goodneſs towards the Children of Men. *Whoſo is wiſe will conſider theſe things, and they ſhall underſtand the loving kindneſs of the Lord:* Or look over, in the next place, the Book of Nature, the *Heaven's the work of his Fingers, the Moon and the Stars which he hath ordained:* Thoſe Immenſe *fire Works*, whoſe motion is as regular as rapid, and are but as the twilight of the everlaſting Day, and of that Light which is inacceſſible: Read him further yet in the amazing Inſtance of his Grace, when *he reconciled the World to himſelf in Chriſt*, let the *Myſtery of Godlineſs* be ever preſent to thy Mind; *God manifeſt in the Fleſh, juſtified in the Spirit, ſeen of Angels,*

Pſ. 107. 13.

Pſ. 8. 3.

1 Tim. 3. 16.

Angels, preach'd unto the Gentiles, believed on in the World, received up into Glory. But it cannot be imagin'd that I ſhould enter into the detail of thoſe innumerous Objects that afford proper Matter for the Contemplation and Improvement of our Thoughts; and therefore the ſuccinct Advice of the Apoſtle will appoſitely take place here: *Whatſoever things are true, whatſoever are honeſt, whatſoever things are juſt, whatſoever things are pure, whatſoever things are lovely, whatſoever things are of good report: If there be any Vertue, or if there be any Praiſe, think on theſe Things.* For, the Truth and Reaſon of all is, the Spirit of a Man is an active reſtleſs Principle of internal Motion, that will not be wholly idle, but will be doing, tho it be nothing to the purpoſe, rather than do juſt nothing at all. And therefore unleſs you furniſh it with good ſtuff to work upon, it will take up with that which is next at hand at all adventures; ſo that if we would *bring forth good things*, in our Saviour's Language, we muſt, with his *good Man*, have a *good treaſure in our Hearts*: (*How precious are thy Thoughts* Pſ. 139 17.

to

to me, O God, ſays holy *David, how great is the ſum of them*) not a ſmall inconſiderable Stock of Piety and Knowledge, but a Treaſure, a good Fond, or Bank, for our Thoughts to trade with, and then we ſhall increaſe with the increaſe of God. King *Solomon* requiring us to bind the divine Law continually upon our Hearts, adds, that when we go *it ſhall lead us: When we ſleep it ſhall keep us,* and when we awake it ſhall talk with us. *i.e.* It will entertain our Thoughts, and bear them Company, when we are alone, or, as it's ſaid upon the ſame Occaſion, *when we walk by the way, when we lie down, and when we riſe up:* Times generally of the greateſt Retirement. But now without this good Society at Home, our Thoughts will certainly ſeek out for new Acquaintance; gad abroad for fellowſhip with ſome other Objects; and ten to one in their jant fall into bad Company: Aſſociate with the *Luſts of the Fleſh, the Luſt of the Eye, or the Pride of Life*; and get thoſe ill haunts that our Minds perhaps may never after have the power to abandon.

Prov. 6. 22.

Deut. 6. 7.

BUT

BUT becauſe neither Nature nor Education has furniſh'd all Men with equal matter for their Thoughts, and there are different ſizes in Underſtanding as well as in Stature, therefore

VII. ONE would adviſe to a more comprehenſive Expedient for the government of Thoughts which every one is capable of uſing, and that is for Men to be diligent and induſtrious in that Calling or Station wherein Providence has placed them; to do, as the wiſe King adviſes, *with all their might what their hands find to do.* For this confines the ſtream of our Thoughts to their proper Channel, and hinders them from overflowing their Bank; this hedges in the ramblers, and keeps them to their own Incloſure, who, if left unconfined, would, like *Jeremy*'s wild *Aſs ſnuff up the Wind*, and obſerve no meaſures. God who is the Father of the Spirits of all Fleſh, knew that he had made them active reſtleſs things, and therefore to imploy and find them work, to keep them doing as they ought, when they are not immediately ingaged in his Service,

vice, he deſign'd Men their reſpective Callings and Profeſſions, and ſix parts of time in ſeven for them to take up their Thoughts and imploy them, and if they are not thus ingaged about their own Buſineſs, 'tis odds, but that like St. *Paul's buſie Bodies, they wander from Houſe to Houſe*, mind other Men's, and *meddle with many Matters*; which may in time cauſe as great Combuſtions without, as they do diſorder the Head within. Let our Thoughts then keep within their own lines, and make no incroachments, *hitherto*, within the circle of our own proper buſineſs and Station, let their *proud waves go, and no farther.* Let his Thoughts who is appointed *to the Miniſtry wait on his Miniſtring*, his, who is to *teach*, *on teaching*, &c.

VIII. IT were adviſable for Mens better ordering their Thoughts, to make choice, as far as they can, of ſuch imployments and courſe of life, as is moſt ſuitable to their Genius, and abilities of Mind, for that always ſits the eaſieſt on them, and their Thoughts more Naturally fall in with their buſineſs

ſineſs and abide by it; Whereas if Mens Imploys lie croſs the grain of their inclinations, their Thoughts will be perpetually running after ſomething elſe, at which they are not ſo awkard, or if they aſpire at things to which their ſtrength bears no proportion; *matters too high for them*, and above the ſphere of their activity; the weight of the burden will render them painful and uneaſie; make them *ſtagger too and fro like a drunken Man, and bring them to their wits end*, beſides the damage they may occaſion to the publick; as *Phaeton* endeavouring to mount his Father's Chariot, the management whereof he did not underſtand, was thereby thrown out of Heaven, and had like to have ſet the World on fire.

IX. NEXT to this it may be proper to ſubjoyn the advice of endeavouring to contract rather than enlarge our ſecular affairs, inſtead of ſpreading them wider, to reduce them to as tight and narrow a compaſs as we can, that we may the better attend to the improvement of our own Minds; an acqui-

acquiſition infinitely beyond the moſt pompous temporal attainment. For what are honours, riches, pleaſures, all the World, to a brave refined and accompliſhed Mind? Now multiplicity of buſineſs is a mighty obſtruction to this mental improvement. He that thinks of many things, thinks of nothing; as he that would go ſeveral ways ſtands ſtill; it diſtracts and divides our Thoughts, like water mixt with wine, debilitates and dilutes them; that River will neither be ſo deep, nor ſo ſerviceable for Trade, that is divided into a great many little channels, as that which flows altogether in its own natural bed. Thus it is with our Thoughts, if we let them out at every little chink, which the concerns of the World make in them, they'l be but ſhallow Thoughts, and mar the improvement of our Minds. A Ray collected into a point is far more intenſe than one variouſly refracted. As God do's not love idle, ſo neither overbuſie people: *Martha's* fault was not that ſhe was imployed in ill, but in *many* things, which juſtled for that time the *good part* out of her Mind. Cares

intangle and perplex the Thoughts, and too much Worldly buſineſs limes and clings the wings of our Mind ſo faſt that it cannot take its due and natural flight. Variety of objects ever weakens and diſtracts the force of our faculties, which are ſo ſtinted in their operation, that they cannot with any tolerable vigour direct to more than one mark at once, and therefore if we would bear a due regard to the trueſt improvement of our Minds, and management of our Thoughts, we muſt narrow our ſecular affairs as much as we can; leſt the *multitude of buſineſs*, which *Solomon* ſays, occaſions *Dreams* in ſleep, make our Thoughts to be little better in the day time. And therefore in order to take off our Minds from a too greedy purſuit of ſecular Concernments, that we may be thereby the better inabled to attend upon God and our own Souls without diſtraction, let us

X. IN the next place, frequently ſet before us the vanity of the World, and the emptineſs of all its injoyments. Remembring that that was the reſult of *Solomon*'s

Solomon's vaſt experience in this kind. *Vanity* was the Motto he inſcribed on all things *under the Sun:* for even *when he gave his heart to know wiſdom, and to know madneſs and folly, to ſeek and to ſearch out by wiſdom concerning all things that are done under Heaven*, even this alſo, this noble employment of his vaſt capacities, he pronounces no better than *vexation of Spirit:* for *in much wiſdom*, ſays he, *is much grief, and he that increaſeth knowledge* (it ſelf) *do's but increaſe his ſorrow.* And if this great Maſter of Experience, and skilful Obſerver of things, met with ſo very little ſatisfaction, even in the purſuit of knowledge, and reſolves the *concluſion of the whole matter*, as he ſpeaks, into the *fearing of God and keeping his Commandments*, we may ſafely conclude, that there is nothing here below adequate to the large Soul of Man, worthy to engage his Affections, and ingroſs his powers; and if we can but thus wean our Thoughts from the World and its allurements, we ſhall then be at liberty to lay them out elſewhere to better purpoſe, and to our own greater and more laſting ſatisfaction.

NOT that what I have ſaid on theſe two laſt Heads, is to be underſtood, as if I would have all Men devote themſelves to Contemplation, to quit the World and their ordinary Imployments, and meddle with no buſineſs; for I preſcribe it.

XI. IN the next place, as an excellent remedy againſt evil Thoughts to avoid Idleneſs, which in common experience ever gives the Devil an advantage againſt us; when *David* coming from lolling on his Bed walked idly, it ſhould
2 *Sam.* 11. ſeem, on the Roof of his Houſe, he immediately preſented *Bathſheba* to his Thoughts, and ſoon prevailed with him to accept the Proffer. For when we are the idleſt he is the buſieſt; when we do the leaſt he do's the moſt with us: If our Minds ſleep, he'll ſow his Tares the faſter, and if we let them lie fallow, Weeds will be the natural Product of the neglected Soil. Standing Minds, like ſtanding Waters, puddle and corrupt, and become the proper Element of Vermin.

XII. AGAIN,

XII. AGAIN, it will be our Wiſdom, for the better management of our Thoughts, now and then to review them, to call them together to the Muſter, and examine the ſtate and plight of our Minds, to encourage good Motions, and diſcountenance Bad, and to let them know we have ſet a ſpie upon them, and that they come not there without our Obſervation. And becauſe every Man has his blind Side, and the Sin of his Boſom, and conſequently our Thoughts run further into ſome ſort of Objects than others, we muſt take particular care, and after ſuch review ſhall be better inabled, to guard there moſt, where our Thoughts ply the moſt, where their haunts are, and the company they moſt delight in; as he who commands in chief in a Siege will place the ſtrongeſt Guard there, where the Walls or other Fortifications of the Town are the weakeſt. So, if you find that luſt, for inſtance, has ſtollen in at the Windows of your Eyes, and got the greateſt aſcendant over you, watch your Thoughts on that ſide, for there they'll be ſure to

hanker; So, again, if you obſerve your ſelf the weakeſt on the ſide of provocations, and Anger be your infirmity, take care to have your Reaſon within call, and take off your Thoughts betimes from reſentments, and meditating revenge, for that's the Subject they'll be ſure moſt of all to dwell on, *&c.* And thus by reviewing our Thoughts we ſhall both acquire Power, and learn how to manage them, and be able to countermine the Devil, who knowing our ſtrong and feeble part, better many times than we do our ſelves, always lays his train there where 'tis moſt likely to take fire, and to blow up our Hearts, the ſtrong Fort of our innocence.

XIII. SINCE, as has been before obſerv'd, our Thoughts are generally too much at the command of our paſſions, ſo that look what ſort of Affections bear the ſway in a Man's Heart, that way his Thoughts will take their courſe, therefore is it highly adviſable, again, to ride this brutal part of us with a ſtrait rein, to raiſe and ſpiritualize our *Affections*, by *ſetting them on things*

things above, and not letting them run ſo madly as they do on *things that are upon the Earth*. For tho' Thoughts give the firſt being to Affections, as no Man can love or hate a thing before he thinks on't, yet when they are once placed upon their Objects, they make our Thoughts dance after them at their pleaſure. As if fear has ſeiz'd us, it calls in all our Thoughts to view the frightful Object, diſorders our powers, and makes the Mind paint the bug-bear with unjuſt dimenſions, perhaps, and unnatural colours; ſo, if deſire carry us abroad amongſt variety of Objects, our Thoughts muſt keep it company, and lie under that infinite perplexity and diſtraction that naturally attends its extravagance, and therefore if we would command our Thoughts, we muſt firſt learn to command our Paſſions.

XIV. HE that would have the company of good Thoughts, muſt entertain them kindly, and give them a friendly reception when they come and viſit him. If you receive them coldly, and with an Air of indifferency, they'll

be as ſhie to you in time, as you can be to them; for the Divine *Spirit*, the great Author of them, will not always *ſtrive* with Men, but will take wing, fly away, and deſert you, for they are nimble movers, and are ſent upon an errand that is your own trueſt intereſt, and therefore if you have not yet learnt to be wiſe to your ſelves, by cloſing with their propoſals, co-operating with them, and *working out your own Salvation*, they have no Commiſſion to force or drive you on to Happineſs, like *an Horſe or Mule that have no underſtanding*, but will leave you not only where, but worſe than they found you.

XV. SINCE few Men are of that ſtrong and athletick temper of Soul, as to be able to bear the ſhocks of adverſity, but that it generally ruffles and diſcompoſes their Thoughts, and, like the deſperate puſhes of an Enemy, breaks their Ranks, and puts them in diſorder, it would be therefore of excellent and common uſe for the management of our Thoughts in thoſe exigences,

exigences, to be verſt in the Theory of the Divine diſpenſations, to bring our ſelves to a recumbency upon God, and *commit our Cares to him who careth for us*, that we may thereby maintain an evenneſs of Temper amidſt the rougheſt Emergencies; and enjoy a calm of Mind within, amidſt the loudeſt Storms without.

XVI. AGAIN, ſince, notwithſtanding the immaterial and ſpiritual Nature of the Soul, it is capable of being wrought upon, and affected by the body during their Union; for when once link'd and wedded together, there ariſeth a mutual ſympathy betwixt the unequal couple, and that thence doubtleſs proceed many fooliſh, wandering, and impure cogitations, it would be adviſable to tame the one by the macerations of the other, to mortifie the Fleſh, to *keep our Bodies under*, and not cram and indulge them, till the Beaſt rides the Man, till they grow too hard for our reaſon, throw off its government, and draw even it in too, to ſecond the Motions and Solicitations of

of the fleſh. For the *Flames* of Luſt *quench the Spirit*, as the ſcorching Sunbeams put out the gentler heat of the fire. Foul weather in the lower Region ſends up nought but filthy Streams and Vapours. *The pure in Heart only ſhall ſee God* here, as well as hereafter; and thence be furniſhed with juſt and elevated Conceptions: For he will not accept *polluted Bread upon his Altar*: Nor will admit an unclean Sacrifice. If therefore we would be Maſters of our own Thoughts, we muſt firſt be Maſters of our Appetites, and not pamper and indulge our Carkaſſes, but wiſely avoiding all exceſſes of this kind, muſt endeavour, by a Subſtraction of unneceſſary fuel from the Body, to let the fire thereby kindled in our Thoughts go out.

Mal. 1. 7.

XVII. LASTLY, it will highly conduce to the ordering of our Thoughts aright, to live, as much as poſſibly we can, under this Apprehenſion, that Almighty God is preſent with them, ſees, knows, reads, and ſcans their ſubtleſt Motions and darkeſt Intrigues, better than the Eyes and Ears

Ears of Men hear or ſee them in their fruits of Words and Actions. For lo there is not a Thought in our Heart, but *he knoweth it altogether, and afar off*; *for I know their Imagination*, ſays God, concerning his People, *which they go about even now, before I have brought them into the land which I ſware*; *For He, even He only, knows all the Hearts of the Children of Men*; and, as *Job* ſays, *no Thought can be with-holden from him: Hell and Deſtruction are before him, how much more then the Hearts of the Children of Men?* For ſhall not the Almighty Artificer, who *made the Heart*, know all the wheels, the ſprings and movements that are in it? Go then, and *aſcend up into Heaven*, in the Pſalmiſt's Rethorick on this occaſion, *make thy bed in Hell, take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermoſt parts of the Sea*, go whither, do what thou wilt, there's an Ear to over-hear thee, an Eye to over-look thee, and an inviſible hand to tranſcribe and regiſter the cloſeſt tranſactions of thy Mind: We find the Royal *David* had ſuch a continual lively Senſe of this matter on him, that he tells us, *when he awaked God was ever preſent*

Deut. 31. 21.

1 *King.* 8. 39.

Job 42. 2.

Prov. 15. 11.

Pſal. 139.

ſent with him, occur'd immediately to his Mind; as thoſe objects generally do at our wakening, which moſt of all engroſs our Thoughts. And could we but learn to live under the ſame quick Apprehenſion, would we *walk* leſs by Senſe and more by *Faith*, and look through at thoſe things that lie *within the Vail*, it would be of mighty uſe to us in the management of this hidden and unſeen part of us. For ſince our Sins in embrio at their firſt conception in the Soul, are as loathſom in God's Eyes, as they are in their Birth and Production ſhameful in the eyes of Men: Since the remarks of thoſe who are of like Infirmities with our ſelves are powerful enough to perſwade us, to the regulation of our outward Behaviour, and we ſhould really be in confuſion, to have any grave ſober Friend, whoſe eſteem we value, and whoſe judgment we revere, privy to all the fooliſh and unhallowed Thoughts of our Souls; how much rather ſhould the conſideration of God's all-ſeeing Eye lay a reſtraint upon our internal Follies? For what abſurdity is this to be aſhamed of what paſſes in our Thoughts,

could

could Men pry into thoſe receſſes, and yet to let God look on without the leaſt Emotion? What inadvertancy, or Atheiſm rather is it, to be aſhamed or afraid of an overt act of wickedneſs, leſt Men ſhould find us out, and yet at the ſame time riot in our Hearts, and debauch in our Thoughts, when God all the while ſtands by a Spectator, and if he pleas'd himſelf, a juſt Avenger of all ſuch impious Tranſactions? Since then God certainly knows all that paſſes in our Hearts, ſees and obſerves who comes in, and who goes out, is intimate to every unclean, or otherwiſe ſinful Thought, to every unlawful Deſire, to every malicious and revengeful Wiſh; to whatſoever, in a word, is tranſacted in that Cabinet Council; let us endeavour after ſuch an habituated Thought of God, as may mix him, not in our actions only, but in all the movements of our Minds: Let the conſideration of his Preſence engage us to keep ſtrict Diſcipline there, to Order, and Govern, and Manage our Thoughts aright; as what are all open and naked in his Sight, for ſurely the Lord is with them, tho perhaps we are not aware of it.

I ſhall ſhut up the whole with the excellent Collect of our Church to this Purpoſe.

ALMIGHTY GOD, unto whom all Hearts be open, all Deſires known, and from whom no Secrets are hid; cleanſe the Thoughts of our Hearts by the Inſpiration of thy Holy Spirit; that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnifie thy Holy Name, through Chriſt our Lord. Amen.

FINIS.

MVSEVM BRITANNICVM

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